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NMBAC bound for DC again

By BEA CABRERA
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REPORTER

A little over a week after a bill giving the CNMI renewed access to foreign labor was introduced in Congress, officers and members of the Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp. are flying to Washington, D.C. again this weekend for the bill's public hearing.

Those flying to the nation's capital are NMBAC president Alex Sablan, Gloria Cavanagh, Velma Palacios, Marian Aldan-Pierce, Viola Alepuyo, and Perry Inos Jr.

Sablan said the whole effort is to

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CERTIFICATION TRAINING

Participants listen to David Maratita, director of the Alcohol Beverage/Tobacco Control Division of the Department of Commerce, who discussed updates on ABTC regulations and monthly sales report during a certification training held at the Pedro P. Tenorio Multi-Purpose Center in Susupe last Wednesday. A total of 237 individuals from retail stores, hotels, casinos, bars, poker arcades, and restaurants on Saipan participated in the mandatory workshop.

FERDIE DE LA TORRE



Cavanagh is new PIC general manager

By BEA CABRERA
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REPORTER

Effective today, Gloria Cavanagh is the new general manager of the Pacific Islands Club Saipan in San Antonio.

The announcement coincided with the introduction of Inter Pacific Resorts Saipan Corp. as PIC's new management.

According to Cavanagh, she has been working at PIC for over a week now as part of the transitional team.



Cavanagh

"I am working closely with Yoshihito Shibahata, former PIC general manager, as he will remain until the end of February to basically tie up the projects that he has been working on and he will finish that for us. The staff so far has been extremely wonderful and friendly. I look forward to getting in and to try to make it better than it is today," she said.

The former Mariana Resort and Spa general manager said she is ad-

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Torres on DC game plan: Outline progress

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

The Torres administration's game plan for an upcoming U.S. Senate hearing on a bill that would extend the CNMI's foreign labor program

by 10 years is to highlight the progress and efforts of the local government in hiring U.S. eligible workers.

In a statement, press secretary Kevin Bautista told *Saipan Tribune* that Gov. Ralph DLG Torres would attend the U.S. Senate's public hear-

ing on U.S. Sen. Lisa Murkowski's (R-AK) S. 2325, the bill she introduced to extend the transition period of the CNMI-Only Transitional Worker program.

According to Bautista, Torres

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Committee to study CHCC abolition dissolved

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

A special committee tasked to review a proposed abolition of the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp.

has been dissolved.

This came about as private discussions between the bill's author, House vice speaker Janet Maratita (R-Saipan), and the House speaker ensued last Tuesday.

According to Maratita, her House Bill 20-149, which was originally referred to the special committee, has instead been referred to the House Judiciary and Governmental

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Mark Salling, who played bad-boy Noah "Puck" Puckerman in "Glee," has died.

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Local

Marriage between 2 Filipinos is found invalid

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A Superior Court judge has ruled that a marriage ceremony performed at the Philippine Consulate General on Saipan between two Filipinos was not in compliance with local law, invalid, and not enforceable by the court.

Citing the Vienna Convention, U.S.-Philippine treaties,

and U.S. law, a legal marriage is required to be performed in accordance with local laws, according to Associate Judge Teresa K. Kim-Tenorio.

In finding the marriage between Virginia L. Bonifacio and Gil Ramos Medina in 1993 on Saipan to be invalid, Kim-Tenorio said the ceremony lacked a marriage license and was not registered in the marriage register.

"There was not a legally binding marriage," the judge noted in her ruling on Tuesday.

Kim-Tenorio, however, found the 1997 marriage in Chuuk between Gil Medina, who is now deceased, and Antonia Reyes Medina, a Chuukese national, to be valid.

As such, Antonia Medina is the only wife of Gil Medina, and as such, she has the right to bury her husband where she

sees fit, Kim-Tenorio said.

According to court records, Gil Medina killed himself last Dec. 19 on Saipan. He left behind a handwritten note addressed to Antonia Medina, her children, and their grandchild/reared son.

Arrangements were made for a funeral viewing and cremation with Borja Funeral Home to take place Jan. 9, 2018. A representative from

the Philippine honorary consul on Saipan approached Antonia Medina last Jan. 8 and informed her about Gil Medina's alleged marriage to Virginia Bonifacio in 1993 on Saipan.

The consulate representative told Antonia Medina about Bonifacio's claim to Gil Medina's body.

Bonifacio is also against the cremation of the body. She would like the body to be repatriated back to the Philippines to be buried by herself and the two children she had with him.

Bonifacio asserted she was validly married to Gil Medina and has a right to dispose of the body as she chooses.

Then-Philippine Consul Renato L. Villapando officiated the marriage ceremony between Gil Medina and Bonifacio at the Philippine Consulate General on Saipan in 1993.

Shortly thereafter, Bonifacio returned to the Philippines and gave birth to their first child. Gil Medina remained in the CNMI.

Gil Medina visited the Philippines once in 2001 and once in September 2017. During his 2001 visit, Gil Medina conceived a second child with Bonifacio.

Antonia Medina and Gil Medina were married in April 1997 in Chuuk. The two then resided together on Saipan. Their marriage is not in dispute.

At the time of the marriage, Antonia Medina had three children from a previous relationship. Beginning in November 2011, Gil Medina received humanitarian parole from the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, based upon Antonia Medina's marriage to him, their reared son, and biological grandson.

Antonia Medina, through counsel Jane Mack and Christopher Heeb, filed a petition questioning the validity of the marriage between Gil Medina and Bonifacio.

At the hearing last Friday, Bonifacio was not present, but was represented by attorney Steven Pixley.

Antonia Medina's argument is that because the CNMI statute was not followed, the marriage ceremony between Gil Medina and Bonifacio did not create a valid marriage.

Pixley argued that Gil Medina and Bonifacio were not required to comply with local law because the Philippine Consulate General is sovereign territory, and their marriage was presumably legal in the Philippines.

In her ruling, Kim-Tenorio said the matter is one of first impressions.

Kim-Tenorio said that while Gil Medina and Bonifacio were over the age of 18, there is no evidence they were ever issued a license by the CNMI mayor or governor.

As evidenced by Antonia Medina's exhibit, there is no record of the marriage license or certificate being registered with the clerk of court, Kim-Tenorio said.

"This failure to comply with CNMI marriage statutes is fatal to the validity of the marriage," the judge pointed out.

Kim-Tenorio said that despite Gil Medina and Bonifacio's marriage being solemnized by a Philippine consular officer, it still required to follow local law. She said the validity of marriages performed by foreign consuls depends on local laws.

The judge noted that the Vienna Convention on Consular Relations (Vienna Convention), which both the U.S. and the Philippines are signatories to, states in part: "consular officers may act as notary and civil registrar and in capacities of a similar kind, and perform certain functions of an administrative nature, provided that there is nothing contrary thereto in the laws and regulations of the receiving State."

Here, Kim-Tenorio said, Gil Medina and Bonifacio failed to comply with both the license and registration requirements of CNMI law, both mandatory.

Under the requirements of the Vienna Convention, the judge said, Gil Medina and Bonifacio were not legally married.

In the case of marriages, the Philippine Consulate is not foreign soil.

Kim-Tenorio said while Philippine consular officers are authorized to solemnize marriages between two Filipinos of the states under the jurisdiction of the embassy/consulate general, they are not allowed to issue licenses.

Kim-Tenorio said the marriage ceremony between Bonifacio and Gil Medina was not legally enforceable in the CNMI because the authorizing official was not the governor or the mayor, and because the document was not registered with the clerk of court in compliance with CNMI statutory law.

"Accordingly, even if the law of the Philippines did apply, the marriage would still be invalid," the judge said.



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Better Together

CHCC, Star Marianas sit down to talk about Rota

By ERWIN ENCINARES
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REPORTER

Star Marianas Air is pitching a recommendation to the Commonwealth Healthcare Corp. regarding seating concerns for Rota's interisland medical referral patients.

The meeting between the carrier and CHCC on Tuesday was facilitated by Sen. Teresita Santos (R-Rota) after the corporation reached out to her about Rota referrals losing their seats due to the airline's confirmation policies.

The two raised allegations of unpaid debt between them but Santos said in a statement after the meeting that the two decided to settle the alleged debts privately.

Santos said that Star Marianas Air "highly recommended" that CHCC make a "reasonable security deposit" to confirm Rota medical referral seats.

Doing it that way will "ensure payment of air transportation to our interisland medical referral patients pending the complete processing of a patient's travel authorizations [or TA] by CHCC," Santos told *Saipan Tribune*.

In a letter dated Dec. 19, 2017, CHCC chief executive officer Esther Muña asked the senator for help about Rota referrals losing their seats due to a cash-payment prior to confirmation policy that Star Marianas imposed in early 2017.

Muña said in the same letter that the lengthy process of securing TA's create delays for medical referral patient. She requested that Star Marianas provide a 24-hour exemption for Rota medical referral patients to avoid inconveniences.

Although nothing has been finalized yet, Muña told *Saipan Tribune* that discussions about this matter will continue.

"We have an understanding of the process that [Star Marianas] wants us to utilize to better serve...patients from Rota," Muña said. "Overall, it was a good meeting."

While Muña declined to disclose specifics of the recommendation, she said CHCC would be communicating with Star Marianas to further discuss the process.

"Nothing is finalized; they made a recommendation, but we need to make sure it complies with our policies. Further discussions would be made," she said, adding that she was grateful to Santos for facilitating the meeting.

Rota delegation to act

Muña said in the same interview that the Rota Legislative Delegation was brought into

the picture for assistance. She said CHCC wished to discuss with the delegation how to make the transportation process easier.

"This is what we were asking for anyway," she said.

In the same statement from Santos, she said the delegation would give CHCC's appeal

for financial support "serious consideration."

"...CHCC appeals for financial support in order to continue accommodating air

transportation to our patient referrals. In doing so, our Rota patients can be provided the necessary care and/or service at CHCC," she said.

"The same will be taken into serious consideration by our Rota Legislative Delegation when acting on an appropriation bill soon," she added.

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Judge denies IPI motion to dismiss Goodwin's suit

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
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REPORTER

A motion to dismiss a lawsuit filed by a real estate company against Imperial Pacific International (CNMI LLC) for alleged non-payment of \$100,000 in broker's fee has been dismissed.

In an order on Friday, Superior Court Associate Judge Kenneth L. Govendo said the

information in the lawsuit filed by Tim Goodwin, owner of Pacific Rim International, was sufficient to satisfy the required "who, what, when, where, and how" standard for fraud.

He said that Goodwin pleaded enough allegations to provide Imperial Pacific, its executive director, and their three other companies fair notice about the nature

of the action.

The judge also found in Goodwin's lawsuit a valid basis for punitive damages.

Goodwin, through counsel William M. Fitzgerald, is suing IPI, its executive director Lingli Cai, Imperial Pacific Properties LLC, Ever Harvest

Ventures (CNMI) Ltd., and Harvest Ventures Properties LLC for fraud, breach of contract, and breach of duty of good faith and fair dealing.

He wants the defendants held liable to pay him an unspecified amount of damages. He demands a jury trial.



Govendo

ing our workforce, but there will be a discussion on the work that still needs to be done," he said, adding that Torres and members of the NMBAC and the community have been preparing for the hearing.

Bautista said the governor and those involved are working to create a "comprehensive testimony" that includes "tangible employment and economic data with references to new and ongoing initiatives that are undertaken by the Commonwealth to develop its U.S. workforce."

"[Torres] will speak about the Commonwealth's commitment to putting more of our people in jobs, protecting legacy workers who have

contributed their lives to our island, and ensure the progress of our economy and our community," said Bautista.

S. 2325, which was introduced to the Senate last Jan. 19, 2018, by Murkowski,

was a product of the working group tasked with coming up with transition period extension parameters for the development of the CNMI economy.

S. 2325 was introduced in the U.S. Senate on the same day that Delegate Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan (Ind-MP) introduced H.R. 4869 in the U.S. House of Representatives.

Sablan was a member of the working group, which was led by Murkowski, and included several high profile U.S. legis-

lators along with Torres.

In S. 2325 and in H.R. 4869, a 10-year extension is being proposed while bumping up the CW annual cap for fiscal year 2019 to 13,000 instead of the 4,999 set by U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services in November 2017.

While the cap limit is increased, 500 slots will be reduced annually starting fiscal year 2020. The measure also proposes several changes in securing a CW permit, including the creation of a CW-3 permit for employees who have been working in the CNMI since fiscal year 2014, provided that the applicant exits the CNMI for 30 days during the six-month renewal period. CW-3 permits will be renewable every three years.



Torres

sional Worker program beyond 2019.

"The NMBAC has been busy ever since legislation was dropped by Sen. Lisa Murkowski (R-AK), chairman of the Senate Energy and Natural Resources Committee, in mid-January. I leave on Feb 1 for a meeting in Washington state and then D.C. to meet the rest for the hearing," Alex Sablan said.

He expects the NMBAC to do some door knocking with federal officials on the legislation itself and do some courtesy calls on Senate and House members.

NMBAC officer Gloria Cavanagh said they are going back with more confidence.

"When we went to Washington, D.C. last December, we were just full of hope and priorities. Now that a bill has been dropped, we are more

confident and we are going there for moral support and attend meetings," she said.

"We are very happy that Sen. Murkowski and her chief of staff really listened to us and they were sincere in wanting to help us. Of course, nothing is going to be a perfect bill but it is a lot better than what a lot of people has anticipated," she added.

Cavanagh said a bill was supposed to have been introduced in December but NMBAC wanted to speak to the committee first and explain the CNMI's side.

"I am glad they did they give us time and they said they were going to drop it January or February the latest but it was actually dropped a little over a week ago," she said.

"We made some comments through the governor and few of our comments were consid-

ered. I feel Sen. Murkowski and her committee really understands what we are going through. With the senator being from Alaska, her state as a lot similarities with the CNMI in terms of location being so far away from the mainland," she added.

Cavanagh said the bill—titled "To incentivize the hiring of United States workers in the Commonwealth Mariana Islands, and for other purposes"—covers a lot of what the CNMI needs in terms of continued economic growth.

"The bill covered our priorities. There are some things there that are going to be difficult to manage but there are things there that will offset it," She said.

"D.C. right now is in shambles with the pressure on immigration but we hope we will get over this soon," she added.

with CHCC.

She said she has no intention of withdrawing her bill, besides adding that, as she explained during the bill's introduction last Friday, her intention is to make CHCC transparent.

"I am very happy that finally, we are reaching out to each other so we can work toward what is achievable and attainable for the healthcare delivery system," said Maratita.

JGO and Health committees," she said.

Maratita is vice chair of the health committee.

During last Friday's House session, Maratita, acting as speaker in the absence of Speaker Rafael Demapan (R-Saipan), referred H.B. 20-149 to the special committee.

Maratita herself chaired that special committee,

with Reps. Alice Igitol (R-Saipan), Blas Jonathan Attao (Ind-Saipan), John Paul Sablan (R-Saipan), Itibus, and Gregorio M. Sablan Jr. (R-Saipan) as members.

According to Maratita, CHCC reached out to her. She did not elaborate.

"It's a good step," she said of the future meeting

The defendants have moved to dismiss the case.

Govendo said that Goodwin and Cai (acting on behalf of Ever Harvest Ventures (CNMI) Ltd.) had a written agreement dated Nov. 17, 2014, in which Cai's nominee would purchase and receive property.

Govendo said Cai designated Ever Harvest as her nominee and agreed to pay Pacific Rim a broker's fee of \$100,000.

Govendo said the fee was

not paid.

According to Fitzgerald in the complaint, Pacific Rim was retained by David W. Dougherty in 2014 to find a buyer for his property containing 1,764 square meters in Garapan, Saipan.

The lawyer said that, in 2014 representatives of IPI, owner of Best Sunshine International, contacted Goodwin to have Pacific Rim assist in securing properties to support its hotel and casino projects.

CAVANAGH

From Page 1

justing quite well in her new stomping grounds at PIC.

"I am excited being in a new job and new environment—we call it the PIC way of life and smile. You walk out of the office, you hear the people having fun in the water park, and that just makes you feel good," she said.

Cavanagh is a veteran in guest relations, whether in tourism or hotel operations.

"In Guam, I worked as general manager of Guam International Country Club owned by Kan Pacific Saipan, Ltd. for 14 years. When they sold the golf course, they asked me if I was interested in running the operations of the Mariana Resort and Spa on Saipan," she said.

"I moved here on Dec. 1, 2010, and I love it on Saipan. This is probably the last place that I will have a career. I love Saipan and we have no intention of moving back to Guam," she added.

According to Cavanagh, managing PIC is very different and this challenge is something she is prepared to undertake.

"The tourism destination market has become so competitive. What we want to do is to bring back and strengthen the PIC brand and philosophy and, to do that, we are looking into adding and changing some activities within the waterpark," she said.

"We are looking at improving the facility itself as we have our list of items that we are looking at. Last year, for the Tinian and Rota wings, they renovated all the bathrooms. Little by little we are renovating the actual guest rooms and the public areas and we want to expand the property to possibly build more rooms, depending on how the market goes and eligible work-

force," she said.

Cavanagh is aware of the lease issues that concerns PIC and other hotels that are built on public lands.

"PIC only has the office and parking lot that are on public lands so it's not the whole property. However, Public Law 20-35 hopes to extend the leases of these hotels and this is something that I've been working and advocating for since I moved on island because Mariana Resort was actually the first one to have its lease expire," she said.

"Through the Hotel Association of the Mariana Islands, we are also looking after and working for all the existing hotels. We are praying and hoping that the bill moves in the House and hopefully to be voted for and approved by the signature of the governor," she added.

Cavanagh said she left Mariana Resort and Spa in good hands.

"I left Mariana Resort knowing that it is in good hands and, although I'm not involved with it, I know they are working on some solutions. The interim general manager is executive chef William Retardo," she said.

"Retardo has been there for 27 years and he has been more or less my right hand man and confidant for at least the last four years. He knows the resort inside and out and I know he will do a good job," she said.

Currently, PIC is safe from the workforce issue that is plaguing the CNMI.

"PIC's workforce is good [as] we have 80 percent U.S. hire. Of course, we are still rushing with those skilled workers and get our job vacancy announcement to be able to file for our CW-1s but we are pretty safe as is," Cavanagh said.

"Our patrons can expect bigger and better things this year, starting with the new slide feature at the waterpark, which also opens today," Cavanagh added.

TORRES

From Page 1

would be accompanied by Labor Secretary Vicky Benavente, chief of staff Matt Deleon Guerrero, Senate President Arnold I. Palacios (R-Saipan), Rep. Angel A. Demapan (R-Saipan), and members of the Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corp., who previously went with Torres to lobby for the program.

Bautista said the Torres administration would be highlighting the efforts the local government has been exerting to develop its workforce, as well as the progress attained by those efforts.

"The governor will speak about the progress that has been made within our economy and on develop-

NMBAC

From Page 1

attend the hearing on the bill on Feb. 6.

"To prepare for this hearing, we have had three different meetings with our local government politicos, meeting with the House and Senate. We are also working with the CNMI labor task force, the testimony from the Governor's Office, as well as NMBAC's own testimony and we met with Rep. Kilili [Gregorio Kilili C. Sablan] twice—once as NMBAC and second as Chamber of Commerce representatives," Sablan said.

The bill, called the Northern Mariana Islands U.S. Workforce Act, was introduced last week on the U.S. House and Senate floors. It seeks to extend the CNMI-Only Tran-

CHCC

From Page 1

Operations Committee and the House Health Committee, chaired by Reps. Ivan A. Blanco (R-Saipan) and Jose Itibus (R-Saipan) respectively.

"...The speaker and I have had serious discussions over the matter and [after] serious consideration and assessments of the leadership, we [decided] to refer it to the



Maratita

with Reps. Alice Igitol (R-Saipan), Blas Jonathan Attao (Ind-Saipan), John Paul Sablan (R-Saipan), Itibus, and Gregorio M. Sablan Jr. (R-Saipan) as members.

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According to Maratita, CHCC reached out to her. She did not elaborate.

"It's a good step," she said of the future meeting

PSS 2017 Teacher of the Year wants to do more

By BEA CABRERA
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REPORTER

His term as the Public School System's Teacher of the Year for 2017 has ended but Kagman High School teacher Gerard Van Gils wants to do more for PSS students, foremost of which is to expand the Million Dollar Scholar initiative to the rest of the high schools in the CNMI. That would encourage more CNMI students to pursue a college education.

Speaking before the Board of Education yesterday on Capitol Hill, Van Gils, more popularly known among his students as "Mr. G," said that one way he could help more PSS students is through the Million Dollar Scholar program.

"I'm not an indigenous person but I find myself deeply rooted here and passionate about developing our children to achieve good education and becoming good members of society... To be honest, I'm a little bit underutilized and I am really good in helping kids go into college," Van Gils said.

He spearheaded the creation of the college preparation program at Kagman High School to solve the problem of not having enough college-bound students on Saipan and to help students do well in college. In 2016, Million Dollar Scholars raised \$2.5 million.

"If I work for you [PSS], how might you use me? I invite you to consider because you have invested in me. Our school system spent a lot of money on this year of my improvement and I take that seriously. That was public money invested in a public employee and I'm ready," he said.

During his term as Teacher of the Year, Van Gils represented the islands in various education trips in the U.S. mainland.

"To be with other Teacher of the Year awardees from the mainland, we get to stand on equal terms. I wanted to represent our islands like a big boy, on equal terms with other states in the union," he said. "I also wanted to represent our people as if we were the biggest state or budgeted state because I believe we have the greatest students."

As for his plan to expand his college preparation classes, Van Gils said: "We are working hard in preparing our kids for college. We started at Kagman High School where we went from having about three to four college students go off-island per year and we are looking at having this in five other high schools," he said.

He assured that expanding the initiative wouldn't need any capital outlay from PSS. "We did this with no budget, no special job title, just simply started lobbying to principals to select teachers who would give

up a period of their day to teach this class as an elective. I prepared the curriculum, syllabus, and lesson plans, as I wanted it to be a turnkey operation where anyone can have college preparation expanded to five high schools," he added.

Van Gils also understands that the recruitment and retention of teachers in the CNMI have been persistent issues; that's why he carries a video that promotes the Marianas and presents it in job fairs in the U.S. mainland.

"Last summer, Kagman invited students from other high schools in our summer SAT prep. As a result, some students have garnered 200 percent in their SATS and average rate of 70 points and it cost them nothing. I fundraised, hired professional teachers, brought them to Kagman and the success was due to the massive Kagman High School effort," he said.

Another project Van Gils started is "Mentor for a Meal" that is now the largest mentorship program in the CNMI.

"It costs zero dollars as it is a fully independent little program where I invited a bunch of my friends who are professionals, entrepreneurs, engineers to have dinner...with a bunch of my kids in a one-on-one dinner at the Hyatt [Regency Saipan] to talk about opportunities and goals," he said.

Van Gils also wants to expand these projects to Tinian and Rota because the possibilities in the two underserved islands are endless.

Board of Education member Herman Guerrero was impressed with the work and activities that Van Gils has put into in a year.

"For all that you have done, you amaze me. I am glad that you have principles and I am glad you are pushing the kids into college... I'm always a strong advocate of the SAT tests," he said.

"I am glad that you are also engaging the private sector... It's high time that we [PSS] utilize the Teacher of the Year awardees so that they have great experiences and be a driving force with PSS and the board in moving ahead. This is my last year as board member and I also want to see our students succeed in our schools," he added.

BOE chair Marylou Ada congratulated Van Gils and said that after seeing his projects, PSS will be working to realize his vision.

Van Gils finished his presentation by saying that the work must continue. "The work goes on, where our kids go [to college] because when they graduate they will come back in higher percentages. This is my work and my passion," he said.



BEA CABRERA

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IT&E

Dynasty directed to explain why it has no lawyer

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The federal court directed the owners of the defunct Tinian Dynasty Hotel and Casino to explain why it failed to obtain a lawyer for a lawsuit filed by foreign workers over the denial of their CNMI-only Tran-

sitional Worker petitions.

U.S. District Court for the NMI Magistrate Judge Heather Kennedy gave Hong Kong Entertainment (Overseas) Investment Ltd. and Mega Stars Overseas Limited until Feb. 8, 2018, to respond.

Kennedy issued the order Tuesday after HKE director

Chun Wai Chan, who spoke via telephone at the hearing, told the court that they have not retained a lawyer for the case and do not intend to do so.

He cited the company's financial inability to do so.

Kennedy stressed that failing to hire a lawyer in the case may result in removing HKE's

and Mega Stars' answer to the lawsuit and entering a default judgment against them.

At the Jan. 16 hearing, attorney Daniel Guidotti withdrew as counsel for HKE and Mega Stars after both companies failed to pay his fees.

Kennedy informed HKE and Mega Stars at the time that they may only appear in court through an attorney. She also

explained that failure to obtain a lawyer may result in sanctions, including default judgment.

The status conference on Tuesday was intended to determine if HKE and Mega Stars have already obtained a new lawyer.

Attorney Samuel Mok appeared with Eric F. Dona and

Igitol backs planned hotel in Tanapag

Rep. Alice S. Igitol (R-Saipan) expressed support yesterday to a company's plan to build a hotel in Tanapag, saying it will boost development projects in the village and give its people job opportunities.

Igitol, who attended a Division of Coastal Resources Management hearing last Jan. 23 at the Tanapag Middle School, said she supports the \$144.3-million project of American Sinopan LLC, not only as a representative of Precinct IV but as a resident of Tanapag.

The project will be built on the west site of the middle school in Tanapag.

Among the reasons that Igitol cited for supporting the project is the free training the company will provide, employment opportunity to the residents of Tanapag who are finding it hard to find jobs because of a lack of transportation, and the first priority the company will give to hiring Tanapag residents.

She also pointed out that American Sinopan has promised to provide employment opportunities to residents first before it hires anyone from outside the Commonwealth.

"It is my responsibility as

Judge dismisses tax dispute lawsuit

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE
ferdie_delatorre@saipantribune.com
REPORTER

The federal court dismissed on Tuesday separate lawsuits filed by Bridge Capital LLC chief executive officer John K. Baldwin and his company in Delaware against the U.S. government over a tax dispute.

U.S. District Court for the NMI designated Judge Frances M. Tydingco-Gatewood dismissed Baldwin's and Claston LLC's lawsuits at their request.

Dismissed with prejudice means Baldwin and Claston LLC can no longer re-file the lawsuits.

Tydingco-Gatewood directed the clerk of court to close the cases.

Baldwin and Claston LLC, through their Michael Dotts and Deborah Deitsch-Perez, and the U.S. government, through Tax Division senior litigation counsel Joseph A. Sergi, moved to dismiss the lawsuits pursuant to their agreement that settled both cases.

Last October, Baldwin told *Saipan Tribune* that although the court ordered him to pay a \$2.1 million tax and penalty capped at 15 percent, it is the Internal Revenue Service that owes him.

Baldwin said the essence

six other co-plaintiffs. There are 15 named plaintiffs in this case.

In their lawsuit, Dona and co-plaintiffs alleged that the owners and the management of Tinian Dynasty lied to them about their immigration status, that they were authorized to work despite the denial of their CW-1 petitions.

Ferry that sank was told not to carry people

WELLINGTON, New Zealand (AP)—The Kiribati government says a ferry that sank this month near the remote Pacific nation had been damaged and was ordered not to carry passengers before it sailed.

Authorities say about 80 people are missing, although they haven't confirmed the exact number. A New Zealand maritime plane used its radar system to find seven survivors on a small wooden dinghy Sunday.

Government spokesman Tearinibeia Enoo-Teabo said Wednesday that Kiribati maritime authorities had ordered the MV *Butiraoi*, a 17.5-metre (57-foot) wooden catamaran, not to carry any passengers because

it was seriously damaged. It's unclear if the damage to the navigational system, rudders and hull had been repaired.

He says investigators are going to the island to find out more about the passenger count and why the ferry left despite the orders.

an elected official of the Legislature to make sure that any and all economic development in the CNMI are properly scrutinized to make sure they are positively responsive to the well-being of our social, education, health, and environment," she said.

Igitol said that social well-being is dependant on the employment of its citizens. To this end, American Sinopan has created a community based association called the Tanapag Community Enhancement Association, which has started its public contribution program by donating the first complete set of computers to Tanapag Middle School.

The computers are according to the specification provided by the principal, Hilda Rios.

In addition to the school computers donation, American Sinopan plans to upgrade the present sewer system that runs through Tanapag to solve the sewer overflow that have been happening in the village for years past.

Igitol said she sees more positive benefits to come to Tanapag in the years to come from American Sinopan's proposed hotel project. (PR)



Inter-Pacific Resorts (Saipan) Corp. dba Pacific Islands Club Saipan is pleased to announce the appointment of Mrs. Gloria Cavanagh to the position of General Manager effective February 1, 2018. Prior to accepting this position, Mrs. Cavanagh was the former General Manager of Mariana Resort and Spa for over seven years. In addition, she is a HANMI Board member since 2012 and the Board Secretary of Northern Marianas Business Alliance Corporation (NMBAC). She was also elected as the MVA Board member in June of 2016 and held the position of Secretary from August 2016 through September 2017 prior to her appointment as MVA Chair. Mrs. Cavanagh brings extensive experiences and knowledge to the company and has a proven track record of success in the General Manager role, which will be invaluable in meeting the hotel's goals and objectives.

Pacific Islands Club Saipan is confident that Mrs. Cavanagh will be an excellent match for this position and a strong asset to the company. Please join us in congratulating Mrs. Cavanagh as she takes on the role as the General Manager of Pacific Islands Club Saipan and wish her a successful career on her new venture.



Finance to distribute government W2's

The Division of Revenue and Taxation will begin releasing W2's with each department's

payroll, according to Finance Secretary Larissa Larson.

"Following the recent conclu-

sion of the distribution of 2017 W2-CM and Annual Reconciliation forms to employers, our

office will now transmit W2's to all government employees. Anyone who does not receive their W2 should contact us immediately. Form 1099s have also been released so taxpayers should start receiving those in the mail by next week. Any-

one who does not receive their 1099 within two weeks should contact Revenue and Taxation," Larson said.

Gov. Ralph DLG Torres emphasized that the current distribution of W2 forms enhances the timeliness of tax

disbursement.

"Last year, the Department of Finance worked toward improving the efficiency of tax refunds and rebates. I am pleased with the efforts of their team this year and I encourage our government employees to prepare their tax filings as soon as possible to mitigate any delays," Torres said.

Larson added that taxpayers also have the option to avail of tax refund advances if needed.

"We've had successful collaboration with the Bank of Saipan and Express Financial over the years and that collaboration continues. Anyone

who needs their tax refund before the scheduled release date can bring a stamped copy of their filed tax return to either institution and apply for a loan against their tax refund. Both of our partners have expressed that they are looking forward to working with our taxpayers," Larson said.

Tax forms will be available online at www.cnmidof.net by the end of the week.

For more information please contact the Administration Office of the Division of Revenue and Taxation at 664-1000, 664-1098 or via fax at 664-1015. (PR)

Saipan to honor late mayor Rios

Former Saipan mayor Jose Santos Rios passed away last week and the Municipality of Saipan is working on his memorial service. He was the Saipan mayor from Jan. 8, 1982 until Jan. 7, 1986.

He was the third mayor to govern Saipan since the CNMI was declared a commonwealth in January 1978.

According to Saipan Mayor David M. Apatang, he knew Rios back when he was in the eighth grade, with Rios serving as his teacher.

Apatang said that Rios was an amazing instructor and mayor who greatly cared for

the island.

Saipan and Northern Islands Municipal Council chair Luis "L.J." Castro said it is only fitting that the ceremony to honor Rios is held at the Kiosku in Chalan Kanoa, as it memorializes all former island leaders.

Friends and families of the late mayor will attend the memorial even if his remains will be buried in the United States where he and his family currently reside.

Castro said the municipality would host the memorial service in February. Specific dates and details will be announced later.

The Governor's Office was also made aware of Rios' passing and the municipality hopes the office will possibly commemorate Rios in some way.

Rios passed away sometime last week. The Municipality of Saipan was made aware of Rios' passing late last week.

According to Apatang, he is still awaiting word from Rios' eldest son, Joey Rios, about his father's cause of death and additional information.

Rios is survived by his wife, Emilia Rios, and their four children, Joey Rios, Roy Rios, and two daughters. (*Kimberly A. Bautista*)

'It is a good chance to show CUC projects as they are to judge, EPA'

By FERDIE DE LA TORRE

FERDIE_DELATORRE@SAIPANTRIBUNE.COM

Judge David Carter's tour and inspection of different Commonwealth Utilities Corp. projects gives the agency a chance to present the projects "as they are" to the judge and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, according to CUC executive director Gary Camacho on Tuesday.

In an interview during the tour and inspection, Camacho said there's still a lot of work that needs to be done with CUC projects and that they will be working closely with EPA in making some adjustments.

During the tour, Carter, the designated judge for the U.S. District Court for the NMI, took photos of the projects and facilities with his cell

phone and his discussion with CUC and EPA lawyers and personnel, as well with contractors' representatives.

Carter has been in talks with the U.S. government, CUC, and Gilbane Federal about the progress of some CUC projects.

Gilbane Federal is the court-appointed company that is overseeing some CUC projects.

Camacho said that Carter is here to review projects outlined in stipulated orders 1 and 2.

SO1 focuses on drinking water and water issues and the restructuring of CUC's organization. SO2 are projects relating to oil spill prevention, preparedness, and response.

"Right now they have gone through a number of areas at the water facilities,

some of the new tanks, the filtration at the airport and other areas," said Camacho shortly after Carter finished inspecting the newly-built water tank at the Northern Marianas College.

Camacho said they will also inspect Power Plant 4 in Puerto Rico and Power Plant 1 in Lower Base.

He said that he, along with EPA and CUC's water and power personnel, will be reviewing other matters.

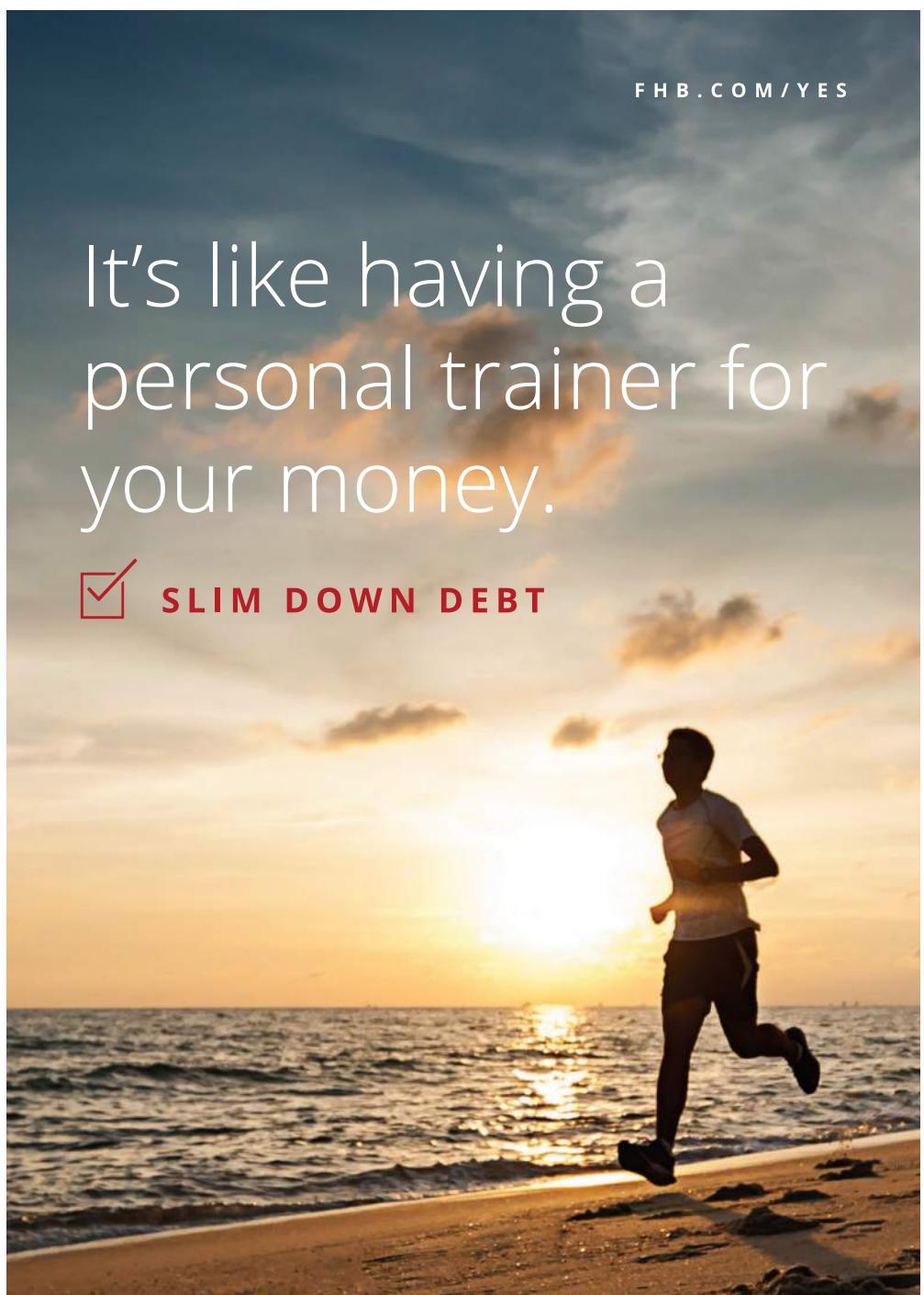
Camacho said there are some questions that they need to answer and some areas of concerns that they have raised in the water system. Construction is already done on the NMC water tank but it would go into effect sometime in April, Camacho said. Construction to replace the old tank started a year and a half ago.



FERDIE DE LA TORRE

Department of Justice environmental enforcement section senior attorney Bradley R. O'Brien, left, U.S. Environment Protection Agency regional counsel Janet A. Magnuson, and EPA environmental engineer F. Russell Mechem II are all smiles outside the U.S. District Court after a status conference on the progress and other issues with some Commonwealth Utilities Corp. projects.

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**Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands
Office of the Secretary of Public Works**

2nd Floor Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan, MP 96950



**INVITATION FOR BIDS
DPW-18-IFB-008**

**ROTA ROUTE 10 HAZARD ELIMINATION PROJECT
PROJECT NO. CM-NH-0010 (003)**

Governor Ralph Dlg. Torres, and Lt. Governor Victor B. Hocog, through the Department of Public Works (DPW) is soliciting sealed bids for the Rota Route 10 Hazard Elimination Project, Rota, Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands (CNMI).

The project package will be available on or after **January 19, 2018** at Technical Services Division, Department of Public Works, located on Second Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, San Jose, Saipan. A non-refundable payment of **One Hundred Dollars (\$100.00)** is required for each set. Payment must be made to the CNMI Treasurer and a receipt of payment must be presented when obtaining the Scope of Work at the DPW Technical Services Division.

All interested bidders are also required to include Insurer Clearance Certification (ICC) in their bid packages in order to bid on this project. The ICC can be obtained at the Department of Commerce/Office of the Insurance Commissioner (OIC) on Capitol Hill.

Bidding procedures shall be in full compliance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations currently in effect."

Breach of Ethical Standard

• **Gratuities.** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for any person to offer, give or agree to give any employee or former employee, or for any employee or former employee to solicit, demand, accept, or agree to accept from another person, a gratuity or an offer of employment in connection with any decision, approval, disapproval, recommendation, preparation of any part of a program requirement or a purchase request, influencing the content of any specification or procurement standard, rendering of advice, investigation, auditing or in any other advisory capacity in any proceeding or application, request for ruling, determination, claim or controversy, or other particular matter, pertaining to any program requirement or a contract or subcontract or to any solicitation or proposal therefor. **NMIC Section 70-30.3-725 (a)**

• **Kickbacks.** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for any payment, gratuity or offer of employment to be made by or on behalf of a subcontractor under a contract to the prime contractor or higher tier subcontractor or any person associated therewith as an inducement for the award of a subcontract or order. **NMIC 70-30.3-725 (b)**

• **Contingent fees.** It shall be a breach of ethical standards for a person to be retained, or to retain a person, to solicit or secure government contracts upon an agreement or understanding for a commission, percentage, brokerage or contingent fee, except for retention of bona fide employees or bona fide established commercial selling agencies for the purpose of securing business. **NMIC 70-30.3-730**

There will be a **Mandatory Pre-bid Conference** for this project on **February 8, 2018 9:00 a.m.** local time at the Mayor's Office Conference Room, Rota. The Prospective bidders are encouraged to familiarize themselves with the site. All questions regarding this project must be submitted in writing no later than 4:30 p.m. local time on **February 28, 2018** to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547. Response to questions shall be shared with prospective bidders.

Prospective bidders should examine and review the invitation for bids with care. If it should appear to a prospective bidder that the performance of the work under the contract or any of the matters relative thereto is not sufficiently described or explained in the invitation for bids, or that any discrepancy exists between different parts of the invitation for bids, or that full intent of the invitation for bids is not clear, then the prospective bidder shall submit a written request for clarification no later than ten (10) working days before the scheduled bid opening at 4:30 pm to **Mr. Anthony A. Camacho, Director of Technical Services Division**, 2nd Floor, Oleai Joeten Commercial Center, Saipan or fax to (670) 234-3547.

The prospective bidder shall examine carefully the site of the proposed work and the invitation for bids before submitting a bid. The Contracting Officer (CO) may, upon recommendation of the Contracting Officer's Technical Representative (COTR), issue an addendum notifying all prospective bidders known to have received an invitation for bids, or if issued after the deadline for submission of the notice of intention to bid, to those persons who submitted such notice, of any changes to the invitation for bids. The Department of Public Works will make every reasonable attempt to notify all persons who obtained the invitation for bids from the Technical Services Division by telephone to pick up the addendum or if the CO chooses, the addendum may be mailed or delivered personally or by facsimile machine. If the bid proposal requires the acknowledgment of addenda, the prospective bidder shall indicate the date of each addendum in the space provided. **It shall be the prospective bidder's responsibility to confirm the existence of any addendum by telephoning the COTR at (670) 234-9828/9838 no later than ten (10) Calendar days before the scheduled bid opening.**

Sealed bids must be marked "DPW-18-IFB-008". For bidders within the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be submitted to the Office of the Director of Procurement and Supply, located at the former Emergency Management Office, Ascension Drive, Building No. 1301, Capitol Hill, Saipan, no later than **10:00 a.m. local time, March 6, 2018**. Bidders located outside of the CNMI may obtain an additional Seven (7) working days for receipt of their bids by submitting a Notice of Intent to bid. Notices of Intent to bid must be received by the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than **10:00 a.m. local time, March 6, 2018**, and must be transmitted via facsimile to (670) 664-1515, or via e-mail to procurement@pticom.com. For bidders located outside the CNMI, an original and two copies of sealed bids must be postmarked by the U.S. Postal Service or the official government postal service of a foreign country no later than **March 6, 2018** and the BID documents must be received at the Office of the Director of Procurement and Supply no later than **March 15, 2018**. Note that failure to submit the required number of copies may cause for rejection of a bid.

Bids will be publicly opened and read at the Office of the Director of Procurement and Supply, located at the former Emergency Management Office, Ascension Drive, Building No. 1301, Capitol Hill, Saipan, at **10:00 a.m. local time, March 19, 2018**. However, if no notices of intent to bid were received from bidders outside the CNMI, bids will be opened at **10:00 a.m. local time, on March 6, 2018**.

For bids greater than Twenty-Five Thousand Dollars (\$25,000.00) a bid security of fifteen (15%) of the bid amount must accompany the bid. **Bid security shall be on a bid bond, in cash, by certified check, cashiers check or other form acceptable to the government. A surety company shall hold the certificate of authority from the U.S. Secretary of the Treasury as an acceptable surety or other surety acceptable to the Attorney General. Surety requiring approval of the Attorney General must be pre-approved prior to bid submission.** Checks must be made payable to the CNMI Treasurer, with the name of the bidder and a notation on the face of the check: "Credit Account No. 44660". If a bid bond is submitted it must be accompanied by an Insurer Clearance Certification (ICC).

The bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be subject to a responsibility determination in conformance with the CNMI Procurement Regulations **\$70-30.3-245**. The responsible bidder submitting the lowest responsive bid will be awarded a contract with the CNMI Government and will be required to deliver Performance and Payment bonds, each equal to 100% of the contract price for contracts greater than \$25,000.00. Prior to the execution of the contract, the selected contractor shall submit:

- a) A current license from the bonding company showing that it has authority to issue bond in the CNMI, and
- b) A certification from the bonding company that the unencumbered value of its assets (exclusive of all outstanding commitments on other bond obligations) exceed the penal amount of each bond.

A contractor submitting an unacceptable payment or performance bond may be permitted a reasonable time, as determined by the P&S Director, to substitute an acceptable bond prior to executing a contract.

Acceptable assets are only:

- 1) Cash
- 2) US Gov't Securities
- 3) Stocks and Bonds traded on US Security Exchange
- 4) Real Property owned in fee simple in US; and
- 5) Irrevocable Letters of Credit

Performance time for completion of this project is **Two Hundred Seventy (270) working days** upon issuance of Notice to Proceed. Liquidated damages will be assessed according to Table 108-1 of the Standard Specifications for Construction of Roads and Bridges on Federal Highway projects, FP-03.

All bid documents received shall become the sole property of the CNMI Government. The Government reserves the right to reject any or all bids and to waive any imperfection in a bid proposal that does not affect the elements of price, quantity, and delivery of the bid, in the best interest of the Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands.

JAMES A. ADA
Secretary of Public Works

HERMAN S. SABLON
Director of Procurement & Supply

CREES WORKSHOP

NMC

NMC's Cooperative Research Extension & Educational Services recently hosted an agricultural pest workshop that taught farmers, gardeners, and other community members about common agricultural pests that affect vegetable and fruit crops grown in the CNMI. Participants of the workshop also discussed the types of damage these insect pests can do and how to control them. The workshop was facilitated by NMC CREES extension agent Arnold Route, third from far right. The next CREES workshop, which will focus on organic pesticides, will be held on Feb. 20, 2018.

Coast Guard medevacs woman from cruise ship off Oahu

HONOLULU—A 71-year-old woman from the cruise ship *Grand Princess* was medevaced by the Coast

**PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY
CNMI GOVERNMENT
INVITATION TO BID
ITB NO.: ITB 18-DFEMS-031**

**SUBMISSION DATE: FEBRUARY 21, 2018 TIME: 10:30 A.M.
"SUPPLY AND DELIVERY FOR TWO FIREFIGHTING PUMPER TRUCKS
FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF FIRE AND EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES"**

COPIES OF THE SPECIFICATIONS MAY BE OBTAINED AT THE OFFICE OF THE DIRECTOR OF PROCUREMENT AND SUPPLY, LOCATED AT THE FORMER EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT OFFICE, ASCENSION DRIVE, BUILDING NO. 1301, CAPITOL HILL, SAIPAN, DURING REGULAR WORKING HOURS.

THE PROVISIONS OF THE CNMI PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS, NMIC SECTION 70-30.3-725 AND 70-30.3-730 PROHIBITING GRATUITIES, KICKBACKS AND CONTINGENT FEES SHALL APPLY.

THE CNMI GOVERNMENT RESERVES THE RIGHT TO REJECT ANY OR ALL BIDS, OR PORTIONS THEREOF, AND WAIVE IMMATERIAL DEFECTS IF TO DO SO WOULD BE IN THE BEST INTEREST OF THE CNMI GOVERNMENT.

/S/ CLAUDIO K. NORITA
COMMISSIONER, DFEMS
/S/ HERMAN S. SABLON
DIRECTOR, P&S

Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands

BOARD OF PAROLE

P.O. BOX 502641, Saipan, MP 96950-2641
Tel: Nos. (670) 664-3300 – 3302 • FAX: (670) 664-3310
E-mail: govbp@pticom.com



**TO ALL MEDIA SERVICES
PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENT**

MESSAGE: The Honorable Ralph Dlg. Torres, Governor and the Honorable Victor B. Hocog, Lt Governor, through the Board of Parole Office, and pursuant to Public Law 8-41, Section II of the "Open Government Act of 1992", hereby give Official Notice that an **Executive Board Meeting** is scheduled for **February 07, 2018, Wednesday, at 9:30 a.m.**, at the **CNMI Board of Parole Office, Capital Hill, Saipan MP 96950**. The following items are included in the agenda:

Board of Parole Executive Meeting Agenda

I. **Preliminary Matters**

- A. Call to order
- B. Roll Call
- C. Presence of Quorum

II. **Consent Items**

- A. Adoption of Agenda

III. **New Business**

- A. Selection of Chief Parole Position

IV. **Miscellaneous**

- A. Schedule of next Parole Hearing
- B. Schedule of next Executive Meeting

V. **Adjournment**

If deemed necessary, members of the Board of Parole may elect to vote to meet in Executive Session to discuss any of the items listed above.

If you have any question or need additional information, please contact the Board of Parole Office at telephone numbers 664-3300 or 664-3302.

/s/
Ramon B. Camacho
Chairman, Board of Parole

1/30/18
Date

Guard 14 miles south of Oahu, Tuesday.

At 1:35 a.m., an MH-65 Dolphin helicopter aircrew from Coast Guard Air Station Barbers Point hoisted the woman and safely delivered her in stable condition to awaiting emergency medical personnel at The Queen's Medical Center.

"It's always a race against the clock trying to get passengers to a higher level of medical care," said Ensign Celesta Brosowsky, a watchstander at the Coast Guard Sector Honolulu Command Center. "We're grateful the cruise ship crew took quick action, recognizing that she needed to be medically evacuated."

Watchstanders at the Coast Guard Joint Rescue Coordination Center received a request for the medevac at 10:04 p.m., Monday, for a passenger who was experiencing stroke-like symptoms.

The vessel was approximately 14 miles south of the Oahu at the time of the request. Watchstanders consulted the Coast Guard duty flight surgeon who recommended the medevac.

The men and women of Air Station Barbers Point serve as "Guardians of the Pacific" in the largest and most culturally diverse of all Coast Guard operating areas — 12.2 million square miles of open ocean, atolls, and island nations. They enhance the readiness of the 14th District with long-range patrol and logistical support capabilities, as well as quick and versatile search and rescue response using HC-130 Hercules airplanes and the Dolphin helicopters. (PR)



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MEMBER

AP The Associated Press

Pacific Islands News Association

EDITORIAL

Editorial ahead: Don't say we didn't warn you

Warning: If you live in California, your highly anticipated, absolutely essential and delicious morning cup of coffee may soon come with a warning.

A state judge will rule in the next months whether coffee should be labeled as carcinogenic under California law, *The Wall Street Journal* reports.

Why? Because coffee, elixir of the gods, contains acrylamide, a flavorless chemical produced in the roasting process. That is one of more than 900 chemicals—count 'em, 900—on California's blacklist of substances known to cause cancer, birth defects or other reproductive harm. Under state law, businesses must warn consumers about the presence of any of those 900 chemicals.

The result is a warning overkill. "They should just put the label inside my door so I see it when I leave the apartment in the morning," doctoral student and recent California transplant Steve Haring told the *Journal*. "It's literally everywhere."

Californians are cautioned about french fries, potato chips, balsamic vinegar, black licorice new cars, office chairs, wood furniture ... and, oh yes, snow globes and leprechaun hats. Honest.

What that list of 900 really means is that almost everything in life carries some risk. Some are large, some vanishingly small. This obsession with risks, many of them infinitesimal, denies the certainty that life is all about risks—how to evaluate them, how to negotiate them. Something, eventually, will get you.

People make split-second calculations about many of those risks every day. Some people may shrug off a cautionary label because they're skeptical of the science. They've seen red alerts—on cholesterol, for example—downgraded. Maybe they consider the warning a dare. (Cigarette smokers?)

Other people have already factored the huge enjoyment and potential health benefits against a minuscule risk. Drinking coffee, for instance, is linked to a lower risk of heart failure, stroke and heart disease.

We support arming people with scientific evidence so they can make smart decisions, not just about food but about other common products and practices.

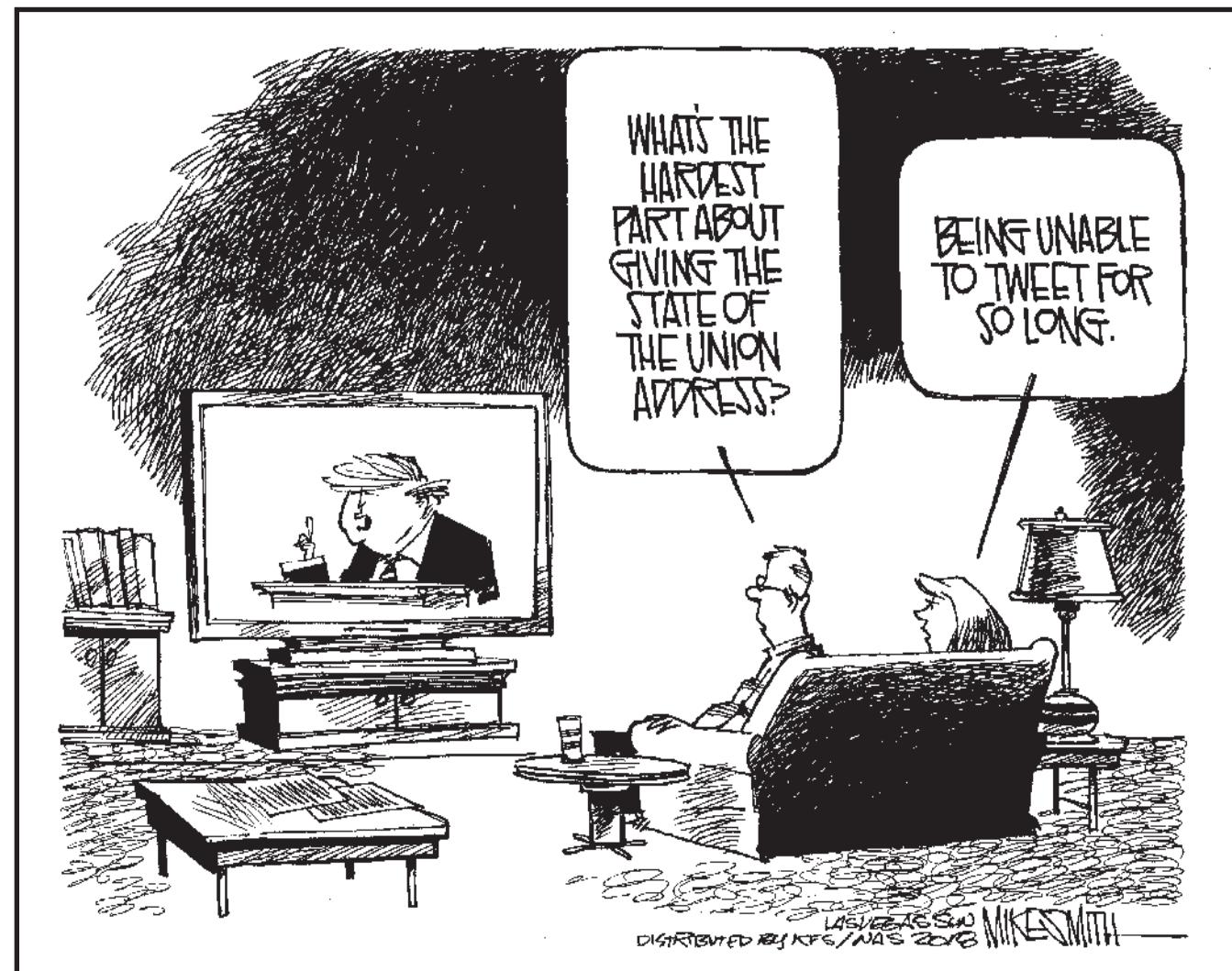
But when government warns citizens about everything, the resulting nonchalance—the dismissive way you rolled your eyes when you read about this coffee alert—means government effectively warns people about nothing. A proliferation of advisories invites people to downplay or dismiss all of them as scare tactics or background noise.

That's potentially dangerous (Warning! The word "dangerous" implies a super-duper warning) because some red flags should be heeded. For instance, black box labels on potentially hazardous medications.

But many other alerts invite a chuckle. Forbes Magazine listed the 24 dumbest but genuine warning labels, including howlers like: "DANGER: Do not hold the wrong end of the chainsaw." And this for a Superman costume: "Warning: This costume does not enable flight or super strength."

For our money, mom's advice is as relevant as it was the first, 10th and 750th times she delivered it: Everything in moderation. That goes for coffee, rich desserts and ... warnings.

(c)2018 Chicago Tribune



Melania is entitled to mind her own business

Melania Trump appears to be a private person. Or, at least, she would be, if she had any privacy.

Everything she does—every gesture, every stray remark—is analyzed, parsed, forced through some kind of political Jell-O mold to see what shape it takes. Various and contradicting personalities are assigned to her: bored trophy wife with expensive habits; sphinx-like operative who holds her cards close; protective hovercraft mom; slacker FLOTUS who owes us a worthy "platform" and maybe a tearful tell-all interview on live TV.

But private is one thing that, for all her privilege, she does not get to be. This is a shame.

She's stuck with a miserable fishbowl of an unpaid non-job. It's hard not to suppose that most former first ladies have been wistfully glad to see their terms come to an end.

Like most things in our ostensibly egalitarian culture, the rules for political wives and political husbands (still limited in number, but growing) are different. We expect married women in political office to have husbands who, while supportive, don't have to show up for every event, don't have to give interviews to women's magazines about what it's like to be second banana to the star of the show. They get to have their own lives.

Yet we harbor an anachronistic assumption that political wives have to perform a unique cultural role as combination untitled ambassador, mini-me to the great man, and global exemplar for how American women think, believe, behave. From here, it looks grueling.

There have been disapproving murmurs all around that Mrs. Trump is not playing the role we expect, even while her husband—like it or not—reinvents the rules of the presidency. Why doesn't she speak up, show up, organize more events, champion more causes, have her picture taken with more orphans and vets and first responders?

The Theory of the Day—well, really, of the Other Day, since the costs of Mrs. Trump's long-distance commutes pretty much blew other Melania news out of the public goggle-sphere Monday—is that it's all a quiet show of "radicalism" that might upset our expectations for future first ladies.

"Mrs. Trump may be doing more than any of her predecessors to upend our expectations of the slavish devotion a first lady must display toward her husband," writes Kate Andersen Brower, author of "First Women: The Grace and Power of America's Modern First Ladies."

Maybe so. But just the fact that the white-glove-and-tea-set title persists even in these "modern" times suggests that there is

JACQUIELYN FLOYD

The Dallas Morning News



a set of expectations this role carries—an unreformed throwback to the not-so-olden-days when the the only way for a woman to be recognized as a Big Shot was to be Mrs. Big Shot.

You might argue that some of the most influential and politically collaborative first ladies predate the "modern" White House—Abigail Adams, Sarah Childress Polk, Eleanor Roosevelt. You might also argue that as first lady, Hillary Clinton did not really do her own political career a lot of favors: Less baggage from the FLOTUS years might have made her a more popular candidate.

Impossible to speculate on whether Mrs. Trump is a subtle radical in the White House. But she takes an awful beating from social media critics and other observers who don't like her husband, don't like his behavior and positions—as if she were a bundled component of a prepaid package.

We're in one of those tuned-in cultural moments where women's voices are being heard: marches and #MeToo, yes, and also the plain demand for fundamental fairness and equity and respect.

Like men, women have a right to be heard. And like men, they have a right to not be heard if they don't want to be—to be private, to keep their thoughts to themselves. There's a brand of backlash feminism that demands Melania Trump state her position on her husband's policies, that she publicly discuss her husband's alleged personal peccadilloes.

Why? It's his job—not hers. Her marriage—rock-solid or shaky, happy or otherwise—is her private business. If we really expect a first lady who publicly explains her every move, or who dishes about her feelings, we're not as grown-up as we pretend to be.

Feminism—if it's defined in the sense of giving women the same obligations and privileges as everybody else (men)—is not about what your politics are, or who your husband is, or what options you choose in life.

It's about having those options in the first place.

EDITORIAL POLICY

Letters to the editor must include the NAME, VILLAGE ADDRESS, and CONTACT NUMBER of the contributor. Letters that do not have these information will immediately be trashed. Contributions consisting of 500 words or less have more chances of getting published. The *Saipan Tribune* reserves the right to publish a contribution or not; the right to edit submissions for length, accuracy, and clarity; and the right to publish and distribute contributions in print, electronic, or other media formats. Submissions may be sent via snail mail to the 2nd Floor, JP Center, Beach Road, Garapan, Saipan, 96950; fax (670) 235-3740; e-mail to editor@saipantribune.com; or through our website at www.saipantribune.com.

US policy chief culprit in Venezuela's collapse

By JOE EMERSBERGER
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

WINDSOR, Ontario—In 1998, when the late Hugo Chavez was first elected, Venezuela had a poverty rate of about 50 percent despite having been among the world's top oil exporters since the 1930s—and had governments that consistently had good relations with the United States.

In the late 1970s, at one of its most prosperous points ever as measured by per capita GDP, Venezuela's child mortality rate was about double that of Cuba's and Costa Rica's.

In April of 2002, Chavez was overthrown for two days in a military coup. The New York Times editorial board said the coup was a victory for democracy and praised the soon to be ousted dictator, Pedro Carmona, as a "respected businessman".

Prominent opposition leaders Leopoldo Lopez and Henrique Capriles led the kidnapping of a government minister while Carmona was in power.

Sixty people were killed in the uprising that ousted Carmona. The U.S. Office of the Inspector General conceded that the Bush Administration provided "training, institution building and other support" to groups involved in the military coup.

Two months before Chavez was overthrown in 2002, he floated Venezuela's currency. It was set by supply and demand rather than at a fixed rate or multiple rates set by the government.

In other words, Chavez corrected what would become the government's most devastating error in economic policy in recent years.

Months after the coup, the U.S.-backed opposition led a two month shutdown of the oil industry that drove the poverty rate over 60 percent.

The government reverted to a fixed exchange rate system and never again floated the currency.

Unfortunately, the exchange rate system has generally been credited by government supporters with preventing capital flight, and therefore contributing to the rapid growth and poverty reduction Venezuela experienced since the defeat of the oil industry shutdown until about the time Chavez died in March of 2013.

Even before oil prices collapsed in late 2014,

Venezuela's economy went into recession due to an inflation-devaluation spiral that should have been ended by floating the currency.

The oil price collapse made the problem drastically worse. Floating the currency again, as Chavez did before the coup, would require external financing to ensure that the poor are protected during the transition, as an economic team put together by The Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) recommended in 2016.

Torino Capital noted weeks ago that all of Venezuela's \$64 billion in outstanding foreign currency bonds are governed by New York law.

The Venezuelan government's most valuable non-financial asset abroad is CITGO, a Houston-based corporation. It is obvious that the U.S. has ample financial power with which to harm Venezuelans if it is liberated from any moral or legal constraints by the U.S. media's coverage of Venezuela.

That's exactly what has happened. One now is more likely to find articles and op-eds in the U.S. media defending Saudi Arabia's monstrous dictatorship than Venezuela's democracy.

Years before President Donald Trump explicitly, and illegally, outlawed Venezuela from borrowing or selling assets through the U.S. financial system, President Barack Obama ludicrously declared Venezuela an "extraordinary threat" to the "national security" of the United States.

Obama's belligerence, given U.S. financial clout, would scare away rational investors and deter loans—therefore increasing the stress on an economy already in crisis.

Trump, who has even threatened Venezuela with military assault, has simply unmasked the malevolence of U.S. policy entirely. His illegal financial embargo makes it nearly impossible for Venezuela to restructure its debt, an essential part of an economic recovery; and deprives more Venezuelans of food and life-saving medicines.

Since at least 2002, it has always been about putting U.S. allies in power in Venezuela regardless how many innocent people are hurt in the process.

A native of Ontario, Joe Emersberger is a popular opinion writer in Canada. He is a mechanical engineer and member of the UNIFOR trade union.

PRO

CON

Venezuela has come to resemble a lower level of Dante's Inferno

By ANA QUINTANA
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

WASHINGTON—On Jan. 24, former major league baseball player Marcos Carvajal died of pneumonia. He was only 33. The common respiratory infection should not have killed him.

But Carvajal was in Venezuela, a country where more than three-quarters of all public hospitals lack basic medicines, and common ailments have become death sentences.

Venezuela's health care system is supposed to be one of Hugo Chavez's greatest legacies. But severe shortages of medicines and medical supplies have decimated public health care.

A recent New York Times expose of Venezuela's mental health facilities found a system in chaos, with patients routinely going without medication, food, hygienic products and even electricity.

The humanitarian crisis can only worsen as Venezuela's economy continues to crumble. It already suffers the world's highest inflation rate, and the International Monetary Fund projects it will skyrocket to 13,000 percent by year's end. IMF also estimates the economy will contract 15 percent during that period.

Food is largely unavailable and unaffordable for many. Long lines into near-empty supermarkets are common, as are stories of the Venezuelan military trafficking food in a starving nation. The daily Basic Food Basket now costs the equivalent of three daily minimum wages.

Oil, Venezuela's prime source of revenue, can no longer salvage the economy. A crumbling infrastructure and the replacement of industry professionals with party loyalists has led oil production levels to plummet from more than 3 million of barrels per day in the late 1990s to only 1.8 million last year.

Public safety is fairing just as poorly. Order breaks down in a dying economy. Venezuela is now Latin America's most homicidal nation. Last year, 89 of every 100,000 Venezuelans were murdered—a rate 20 times that of the U.S. The capital city, Caracas, registered 130 murders per 100,000 people.

Rather than keep people safe, Venezuelan police and national guardsmen have become political enforcers used by President Nicolas

Maduro to squash dissent. Anti-government protests were common last year, with hundreds of thousands of Venezuelans demonstrating throughout the country. In response, government security forces killed 163 protestors and imprisoned thousands.

Finding a solution within the current political system is near impossible. Maduro and his party loyalists control virtually all levers of power. The July 2017 elections were fraudulent to the core.

All 545 candidates "elected" to the National Constituent Assembly—including reputed drug cartel leader Diosdado Cabello—were handpicked members of the ruling Socialist Party. Recently announced snap presidential elections will be just as corrupt and unlawful.

Cabello is not the only narco-affiliated government official in power. Last year the U.S. Treasury Department fingered Vice President Tareck El Aissamid as a Specially Designated Narcotics Trafficker, pursuant to the Foreign Narcotics Kingpin Designation Act. Over \$500 million in illicit assets amassed by El Aissamid and his business partner were seized in the U.S.

Last December, a U.S. court sentenced two nephews of Venezuela's first lady to 18 years in prison for attempting to sell 1,700 pounds of cocaine to undercover DEA agents. Numerous others in the ruling party orbit have also been sanctioned for similar reasons. Venezuela's ruling party has essentially turned the country into a narco-trafficking hub for regional cartels.

There is no question that Venezuela's revolution has failed its people. The big question is: What can the international community do to hasten a return to democracy?

In the past year, the U.S. and various Latin American countries have ramped up pressure on the regime. The U.S. has sanctioned more than 50 corrupt government officials and barred Venezuela from selling its oil debt in the U.S.

These actions have increased the strain on Maduro and his cronies, but more must be done. The people of Venezuela are suffering dreadfully from the socialist thugs in power.

Specializing in Latin American issues, Ana Quintana is an analyst at The Heritage Foundation's Allison Center for Foreign Policy Studies.

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

A workforce nightmare looms

A recent letter by Walt Goodridge was a reminder that reinforced the warnings I issued last year about how locals were being eliminated in the tour guide certification process. Walt and I are not locals and our messages will more than likely fall on deaf ears because it is more often than not about who the messenger is in the CNMI than the importance of the actual message. However, the facts will still remain that locals are being eliminated to a large degree when it comes to the present and future workforce of the CNMI.

When I first revealed that locals were being eliminated, no one really believed me as nothing was done and the MVA went ahead with the certification of a group that did not have a single local. Now, the proof is in the pudding. Forcing membership in MVA—a government agency—is a possible violation of federal law governing the free enterprise system. Worse, it is at a cost of \$530, which puts the oppor-

tunity for many locals to be tour guides out of reach as many locals are living paycheck-to-paycheck. I'm sure that many of the average locals who want to be tour guides do not have the money to even become a member. Furthermore, locals already have a vested interest in MVA, which operates using local funding, so why do locals even have to pay this fee? The fee should only be for CW's and their employer will be responsible for their fee, which is what I believed happened anyway, given an entire group of CW's for one company was certified. The Legislature needs to re-examine the facts Walt exposed:

- 1) Participation in an opt-in government agency should not be mandatory. Locals already have an interest in MVA.
- 2) Benefits do not constitute valid reason. It's more about the tour company than the tour guide.
- 3) Membership does not prove my competence for the job.

Locals already know more about the CNMI than CW's

4) It dilutes my competitive advantage and threatens my livelihood. Locals can't replace CW's when a tour company won't hire them

5) This is superfluous requirement—a design in the law to eliminate locals who can't afford to pay the fee.

6) An alternate way to generate revenue perhaps? That is what the casino is for: new revenue.

7) Finally, "it's the law" is not a valid reason for not addressing these concerns. Laws like this one are deemed illegal, which is probably why they are trashed and laws are even changed out of necessity as it is truly necessary and proper to make sure that locals are hired!

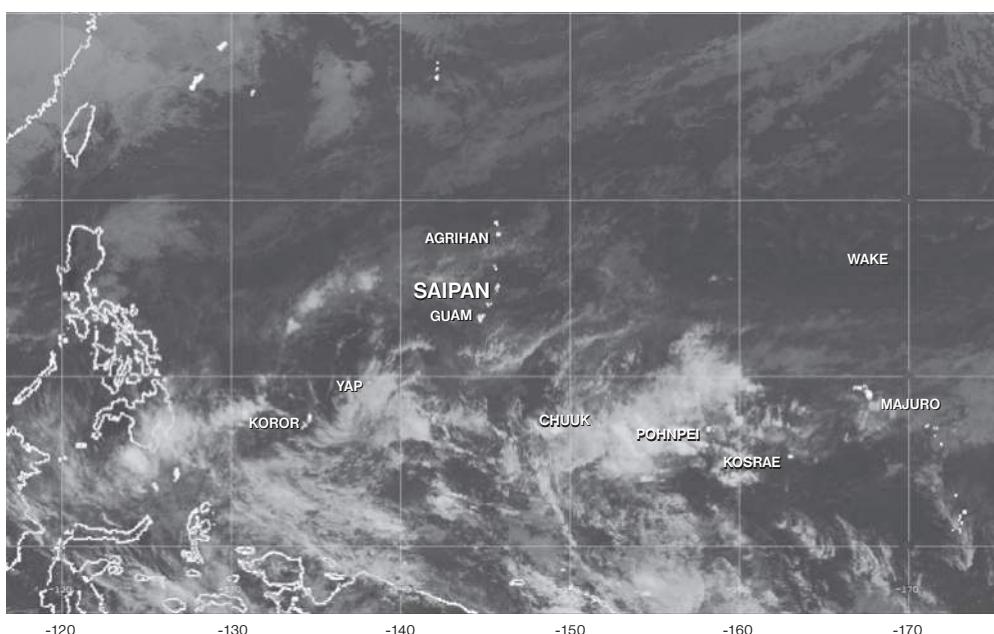
Ambrose M. Bennett
Kagman, Saipan

The Weather

5-DAY FORECAST FOR SAIPAN AND TINIAN

TODAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY	SUNDAY	MONDAY
Mostly cloudy with isolated showers. east winds 10 to 20 mph.	Mostly cloudy. Isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.	Partly cloudy with isolated showers.
▲ 88° ▼ 78°	▲ 88° ▼ 78°	▲ 88° ▼ 77°	▲ 87° ▼ 77°	▲ 87° ▼ 77°

YESTERDAY'S SATELLITE IMAGE



PICTURE TIME: 7:53 AM, WEDNESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2018

Western North Pacific between equator and 25N from 130E to 180.

Satellite imagery showed a few clouds passing over the Marianas this morning and radar showed isolated showers. The clouds and showers are from the remnant of a shear line and will persist through the day. Models keep mostly cloudy skies over the area through Saturday, although there could be times when skies are briefly partly cloudy. Except for today, deep-layer moisture will not be too high so showers will be isolated at best. Winds will be at 20 to 25 mph today then decreasing to 10 to 20 mph tonight.

Satellite image and accompanying information are provided by the National Weather Service. For an updated weather forecast, visit the National Weather Service Guam homepage: www.prh.noaa.gov/guam/

MICRONESIA	▲	▼	°F
Guam and Rota	Showers		86° / 77°
Palau	Thunderstorms		85° / 77°
Yap	Thunderstorms		84° / 78°
Chuuk	Thunderstorms		84° / 79°
Pohnpei	Thunderstorms		84° / 78°
Kosrae	Showers		83° / 79°
Majuro	Showers		83° / 79°

AROUND THE GLOBE

	▲	▼	°F
Auckland	Partly Cloudy		73° / 64°
Beijing	Sunny		30° / 10°
Hong Kong	Partly Cloudy		61° / 48°
Honolulu	Thunderstorms		80° / 72°
London	Partly Cloudy		80° / 55°
Los Angeles	Mostly Sunny		78° / 54°
Manila	Partly Cloudy		86° / 73°
Melbourne	Sunny		73° / 55°
Miami	Mostly Cloudy		73° / 64°
New York	Cloudy		47° / 28°
Osaka	Mostly Sunny		46° / 36°
Paris	Partly Cloudy		45° / 36°
Busan	Sunny		45° / 28°
Rome	Showers		57° / 48°
Salem	Showers		59° / 38°
San Francisco	Partly Cloudy		62° / 49°
Seoul	Mostly Sunny		36° / 16°
Tokyo	Showers		43° / 37°
Washington, DC	Mostly Cloudy		53° / 29°



NMI CRIME STOPPERS

Anonymous tips can now be submitted through the following:
 ■ Call 234-7272 (PARA) on any telephone
 ■ *11 on any IT&E cellular phone
 ■ Log on to the internet at www.nmicrimestoppers.net

TIDES: SAIPAN HARBOR TODAY FEET

2:09 AM	LOW TIDE	-0.68
9:01 AM	HIGH TIDE	2.09
2:37 PM	LOW TIDE	1.00
7:41 PM	HIGH TIDE	2.12

DAY	SUNRISE	SUNSET
Today	6:46 AM	6:15 PM
Friday	6:45 AM	6:15 PM
Saturday	6:45 AM	6:15 PM
Sunday	6:45 AM	6:16 PM
Monday	6:45 AM	6:16 PM

DAY	MOONRISE	MOONSET	MOONRISE
Today	-	7:05 am	7:01 pm
Friday	-	7:58 am	8:01 pm
Saturday	-	8:47 am	8:59 pm
Sunday	-	9:33 am	9:54 pm
Monday	-	10:16 am	10:47 pm

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FLIGHT SCHEDULE AS OF DECEMBER 19, 2017

DEPARTURES				ARRIVALS			
SAIPAN-GUAM (GUM)				GUAM (GUM)-SAIPAN			
UA6394 4:15am 5:05am Daily				UA6393 2:45am 3:35am Daily			
UA6392 8:40am 9:30am Daily				UA6395 7:15am 8:05am Daily			
UA6391 1:30pm 3:10pm 1, 4, 5, 7 via Rota				UA6391 12:10pm 1:00pm 1, 4, 5, 7			
UA6390 2:20pm 3:10pm 2, 3, 6				UA6390 12:10pm 1:50pm 2, 3, 6 via Rota			
UA6398 6:05pm 6:55pm Daily				UA6397 4:45pm 5:35pm Daily			
UA6396 9:50pm 10:40pm Daily				UA6399 8:30pm 9:20pm Daily			
SAIPAN-ROTA (ROP)				GUAM (GUM)-ROTA (ROP)			
UA6391 1:30pm 2:05pm 1, 4, 5, 7				UA6390 12:10pm 12:45pm 2, 3, 6			
ROTA (ROP)-GUAM (GUM)				ROTA (ROP)-SAIPAN			
UA6391 2:35pm 3:10pm 1, 4, 5, 7				UA6390 1:15pm 1:50pm 2, 3, 6			
SAIPAN-NARITA (NRT)				NARITA (NRT)-SAIPAN			
DL297 4:20pm 7:15pm Daily				DL298 10:30am 3:05pm Daily			
SAIPAN-BUSAN (PUS)				BUSAN (PUS)-SAIPAN			
7C3451 3:10am 6:10am 1, 7				7C3452 9:00pm 2:10am+1 4			
7C3451 4:00am 7:05am 4, 5				7C3452 9:05pm 2:10am+1 3, 6, 7			
SAIPAN-SEOUL (ICN)				SEOUL (ICN)-SAIPAN			
TW308 2:00am 6:05am Daily				7C3402 9:30am 3:00pm Daily			
OZ626 2:10am 6:00am 1				OZ625 7:40pm 1:00am+1 7			
OZ626 2:50am 6:40am 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7				TW307 7:45pm 1:00am+1 Daily			
LJ652 3:40am 7:30am 1, 4, 5, 7				OZ625 8:20pm 1:40am+1 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6			
7C3403 4:45am 8:30am Daily				LJ651 9:10pm 2:40am+1 3,			



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NMC FOUNDATION GOLF TOURNAMENT

Marianas Insurance offers \$10K hole-in-one prize

Marianas Insurance Co. Ltd. is offering a \$10,000 hole-in-one prize for the upcoming 15th Annual NMC Foundation Open golf tournament on Saturday, March 3, 2018.

This will be the 15th year the tournament will be held. The event will also be the first major golf tournament of the year.

"For the past several years, Marianas Insurance has supported the NMC Foundation's efforts to raise funds for student programs, facilities, and services," said Marianas Insurance Co. Ltd. general manager Lillian S. Cabrera. "We are excited to be a part of this year's tournament again and wish all the golfers luck!"

The golf tournament is the NMC Foundation's signature event that raises funds to support NMC's academic programs and services.

"We are grateful for Mar-



ianas Insurance's support of our fundraising efforts," said NMC president Dr. Carmen Fernandez.

"The hole-in-one prize donated by Marianas Insurance

helps to fuel the excitement for the event," said Mary Tenorio, NMC Foundation board chair. "Thank you Marianas Insurance for your continued support."

The 15th Annual NMC Foundation Open golf tournament will be held on Saturday, March 3, 2018, at the Saipan Laolao Bay Golf & Resort (West Course). Show time is at 6 a.m. and the shotgun start will be at 7 a.m.

The tournament will follow a medal play format.

First place winners in the men's Championship, A, B, C, Senior, and Ladies Flights will each receive \$500 cash, while \$300 and \$200 will go to the second and third place finishers.

Participants take time to pose at Marianas Insurance's sponsored hole during last year's NMC Golf Tournament. This year, Marianas Insurance will be sponsoring a \$10,000 hole-in-one prize. The 15th Annual NMC Foundation Tournament will be held on March 3, 2018, at the Laolao Bay Golf & Resort's west course. **NMC**

Hole-in-one prizes include a brand new Toyota Tacoma from Atkins Kroll Saipan, a vehicle from Joeten Motors, and \$5,000 in cash from Pacifica Insurance. The tournament will also feature many other items as raffle prizes like smartphones, hotel stays, meal gift certificates, and much more.

Registration and payment can be made at Laolao Bay Golf & Resort or the NMC Cashier's Office. For sponsorship opportunities or registration information, visit mariandas.edu or call 237-6833. **(NMC)**

Bordallo statement on Trump's SOTU speech



Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D-GU) and Guam Society of America president Aylene Mafnas prepare to attend President Trump's first State of the Union address before a joint session of Congress.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

WASHINGTON, D.C.— Delegate Madeleine Z. Bordallo (D-GU) issued the following statement yesterday about President Trump's State of the Union address before a joint session of Congress.

She was joined by Aylene Mafnas, president of the Guam Society of America, who viewed the address from the House Gallery as Bordallo's guest.

"Tonight President Trump delivered his first State of the Union, outlining his administration's priorities for the coming year. The President spoke on the need to rebuild our military, and while I am supportive of efforts to strengthen our national security, we must also ensure that we are investing in domestic programs and

remove the burdens of sequestration on both defense and non-defense programs.

"Importantly for Guam, the President spoke on how he will engage with North Korea and the Kim [Jong Un] regime's threat to U.S. national security and the security of our region. I continue to urge diplomacy and hope the administration will work cooperatively with the international community to avoid actions that could lead to a military conflict.

"The President also discussed the GOP tax law that passed last December. I remain very concerned with the negative impacts the GOP tax law will have on Gov-Guam as it applies the law to Guam's local tax system. Early last year, I warned local leaders to prepare for the

consequences of tax reform and look into ways to insulate Guam's treasury from revenue decreases. Congressional Republican leaders did not give Democrats, or even many of their own Republican members, any say in developing this law, but I will work cooperatively with Guam's leaders to safeguard our community as it is implemented.

"Finally, President Trump stated that he wants to work with both Republicans and Democrats to tackle the challenges that lie ahead. The past year of chaos and division cannot become the norm. I hope that he lives up to this commitment and leads efforts to unify our country so that we can do the business of the American people." **(PR)**

Fiesta's Deleon Guerrero earns HR certification

Pina Deleon Guerrero, senior HR manager for Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan, recently earned the designation as a certified professional in human resources.

The certification, awarded by the Society for Human Resource Management, signifies that Deleon Guerrero possesses the theoretical knowledge and practical experience in human resource management necessary to pass a rigorous examination demonstrating a mastery of the field.

HR professionals who implement policies and strategies, serve as point of contact for staff and stakeholders, deliver HR services, and perform operational HR functions are eligible to take this exam.

Achieving accreditation demonstrates that the SHRM-certified professional meets the high standards expected and needed in HR today.

SHRM awards another level of certification: senior certi-

fied professional, or SHRM-SCP. Today, only six other HR professionals in the CNMI hold a certification from the HR Certification Institute and SHRM. To become certified, an applicant must pass a comprehensive examination and demonstrate a strong background of professional human resource experience.

Wendi Herring, Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan's general manager, lauds Deleon Guerrero for her success.

"It is truly a pleasure working with Pina and I am exceptionally proud of this accomplishment," said Herring. "Her commitment to hours of studying [while] working full-time and balancing family demands is absolutely admirable and commendable. I have always considered her to be an authentic HR professional, but now she has the credentials to back it up." Malou Ernest, SPHR, GPHR, SHRM-SCP and Asia Pacific Hotels

Inc. HR director, said: "Pina worked hard to obtain her certification. I'm proud of her accomplishment and how she has inspired the rest of our HR team to strive to attain their own credentials. These HR certifications are measures of knowledge and abilities in the field. It gives our organization a competitive advantage in today's very challenging economy and labor environment."

The SHRM-CP and SHRM-SCP exams have been accredited by The Buros Center for Testing, a pronouncement that the HR credentials meet the highest standards in testing. The Buros Center is the premier test review center at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

A SHRM certification proves not only what you know in HR but also how you effectively implement that knowledge in the workplace. **(PR)**



Pina Deleon Guerrero, right, senior HR manager for Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan, poses with Wendi Herring, Fiesta Resort & Spa Saipan's general manager, in front of the hotel.

CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Business

Budget talks bogged down by immigration, deficit concerns

WASHINGTON (AP)—A week after a standoff forced a three-day government shutdown, congressional budget talks remain bogged down by Democrats' demands to protect "Dreamer" immigrants and GOP conservatives' concerns about a booming federal deficit.

The deadlock is deflating hopes that lawmakers will reach a breakthrough before another shutdown deadline next week.

At risk are up to \$80 billion in increases for the Pentagon this year alone, and nearly as much money for domestic programs. Almost \$100 billion worth of overdue assistance for hurricane-slammed Puerto Rico, Texas and Florida is being held up.

The knot involves about \$1.2 billion in agency operating budgets for the fiscal year that began in October, along with hurricane relief, President Donald Trump's \$18 billion-plus border wall, and other odds and ends.

The measure has been hung up for months as lawmakers in both parties struggle first with a deal to increase tight limits on spending that are left over

from a failed 2011 budget agreement. It takes both Republicans and Democrats to lift the limits, called spending "caps" in Capitol-speak. But talks have proceeded slowly and are now awaiting agreement on legislation to address younger immigrants currently protected from deportation under the soon-to-expire Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program, or DACA.

But there are other problems afoot. Conservatives say Republican and Democratic proposals on the table would balloon the deficit, sending it over \$1 trillion by next year.

"That's a non-starter for conservatives," said Rep. Mark Meadows, R-N.C., chairman of the hard-right House Freedom Caucus.

The House Tuesday instead passed—for the third time—a \$659 billion Pentagon funding measure. The bill would break the existing budget cap for defense by \$73 billion—almost \$20 billion more than the budget Trump proposed last year. The 250-166 vote House vote broke mostly along party lines.

The move was aimed at

turning up the heat on Senate Democrats, several of whom face difficult re-election bids in states won by Trump.

Republicans are trying to cast Democrats as holding money for U.S. troops hostage to obtain sympathetic treatment for immigrants facing deportation, as well as a variety of other Democratic priorities.

"Senate Democrats are playing politics with defense spending that is so vital to our national security needs," said House Speaker Paul Ryan, R-Wis. "We just don't see this as irresponsible. It's dangerous. You do have training accidents happening more and more these days."

It's unclear exactly what would happen if negotiations fall apart, but one possibility would be continuing current spending levels. That would upset the Pentagon's many allies on the Republican side. It would also upset Capitol Hill's once-dominant Appropriations committees, which have watched in frustration over the past few years as Congress has increasingly struggled to perform its most basic task of funding the government.

Amazon, Buffett and JPMorgan join forces on health care

By TOM MURPHY
AP HEALTH WRITER

Three of corporate America's heaviest hitters—Amazon, Warren Buffett and JPMorgan Chase—sent a shudder through the health industry Tuesday when they announced plans to jointly create a company to provide their employees with high-quality, affordable care.

The announcement was short on details about precisely what the independent company will do. But given the three players' outsize influence—and Amazon's ability to transform just about everything it touches—the alliance has the potential to shake up how Americans shop for health care, and the stocks of insurance companies, drug distributors and others slumped in reaction.

"One of the messages they are sending is they've given up on traditional ways in which employers have tried to reduce costs or manage costs better," said Paul Fronstin, an economist with the nonprofit Employee Benefits Research Institute. Benefits experts speculated

that this new company could create a virtual marketplace that makes shopping for health care as easy as buying a shirt on Amazon. Or it could move directly into buying prescription drugs. Or it could be a system that bypasses insurance companies altogether and contracts directly with doctors and hospitals for better deals.

Employers are up for trying almost anything to control rising health care costs, which have been consuming bigger portions of their budgets for years and burdening their employees.

"The sky's the limit on where they could possibly go with this," said Brian Marotte, CEO of the National Business Group on Health, another nonprofit that represents large employers. "We're always supportive of disruptive innovation, and health care certainly is in need of it."

The venture was announced by Amazon founder Jeff Bezos; JP Morgan Chase CEO Jamie Dimon; and Buffett, the investment wizard of Berkshire Hathaway. The three companies have an estimated 1 million employees in the U.S.

The three businesses said their new venture will be independent and "free from profit-making incentives and constraints." It will have an initial focus on technology that provides "simplified, high-quality and transparent" care.

Those involved said the idea is still in the early planning stages. It was not clear whether the ultimate intention is to move beyond the three companies. But Dimon said: "Our goal is to create solutions that benefit our U.S. employees, their families and, potentially, all Americans."

Employer-sponsored health insurance covers about 157 million people in the U.S., constituting the biggest piece of the nation's patchwork health care market, and neither companies nor their employees are happy with the system.

Health care costs—branded by Buffett "a hungry tapeworm on the American economy"—routinely rise faster than inflation. Employers have been reacting by asking their workers to pay more of the bill and to shop around for better deals, something many people find hard to do.

Nation

Trump warns of immigration peril, touts economy in address



President Donald Trump delivers his State of the Union address to a joint session of Congress on Capitol Hill in Washington, Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2018. AP

WASHINGTON (AP)—Addressing a deeply divided nation, President Donald Trump summoned the country to a "new American moment" of unity in his first State of the Union, challenging Congress to make good on long-standing promises to fix a fractured immigration system and warning darkly of evil forces seeking to undermine America's way of life.

Trump's address Tuesday night blended self-congratulation and calls for optimism amid a growing economy with ominous warnings about deadly gangs, the scourge of drugs and violent immigrants living in the United States illegally. He cast the debate over immigration—an issue that has long animated his most ardent supporters—as a battle between heroes and villains, leaning heavily on the personal stories of White House guests in the crowd. He praised a law enforcement agent who arrested more than 100 gang members, and he recognized the families of two alleged gang victims.

He also spoke forebodingly of catastrophic dangers from abroad, warning that North Korea would "very soon" threaten the United States with nuclear-tipped missiles.

"The United States is a compassionate nation. We are proud that we do more than any other country to help the needy, the struggling and the underprivileged all over the world," Trump said. "But as president of the United States, my highest loyalty, my great-

est compassion, and my constant concern is for America's children, America's struggling workers and America's forgotten communities."

Trump addressed the nation with tensions running high on Capitol Hill. An impasse over immigration prompted a three-day government shutdown earlier this year, and lawmakers appear no closer to resolving the status of the "Dreamers"—young people living in the U.S. illegally ahead of a new Feb. 8 deadline for funding operations. The parties have also clashed this week over the plans of Republicans on the House intelligence committee to release a classified memo on the Russia investigation involving Trump's presidential campaign—a decision the White House backs but the Justice Department is fighting.

The controversies that have dogged Trump—and the ones he has created—have overshadowed strong economic gains during his first year in office. His approval ratings have hovered in the 30s for much of his presidency, and just 3 in 10 Americans said the United States was heading in the right direction, according to a poll by The Associated Press-NORC Center for Public Affairs Research.

In the same survey, 67 percent of Americans said the country was more divided because of Trump.

At times, Trump's address appeared to be aimed more at validating his first year in office than setting the course for his second. He devoted

significant time to touting the tax overhaul he signed at the end of last year, promising the plan will "provide tremendous relief for the middle class and small businesses." He also highlighted the decision made early in his first year to withdraw the U.S. from a sweeping Asia-Pacific trade pact, declaring: "The era of economic surrender is totally over."

He spoke about potential agenda items for 2018 in broad terms, including a call for \$1.5 trillion in new infrastructure spending and partnerships with states and the private sector. He touched only briefly on issues like health care that have been at the center of the Republican Party's policy agenda for years.

Tackling the sensitive immigration debate that has roiled Washington, Trump redoubled his recent pledge to offer a path to citizenship for 1.8 million young immigrants—but only as part of a package that would also require increased funding for border security, including a wall along the U.S.-Mexico border, ending the nation's visa lottery method and revamping the current legal immigration system. Some Republicans are wary of the hardline elements of Trump's plan and it's unclear whether his blueprint could pass Congress.

"Americans are dreamers too," Trump said, in an apparent effort to reclaim the term used to describe the young immigrants in the U.S. illegally.

Asia

Thai junta files charges vs democracy activists

BANGKOK (AP)—Thailand's ruling military junta has filed charges against seven democracy activists for calling for elections and an end to military rule.

Police Lt. Col. Samak Panayawong said Tuesday that a junta representative had filed charges of sedition and violating a ban on political gatherings against the activists, who demonstrated on Saturday.

Thailand has been under military rule since a 2014 coup ousted an elected government. One of many oppressive laws the junta has imposed is a ban on political gatherings of over five people. Sedition, or illicit efforts to bring about change in the country's laws, is punishable by up to seven years in prison.

The junta has pushed back several promised election deadlines, and recently indicated that polls intended for 2018 may be delayed, causing unusual public concern. The concern comes on top of a scandal involving many ultra-

expensive watches possessed by a top junta member whose pay could not account for his ownership. The junta took power with a vow to purge corruption from politics.

"The world's history is proof that people's rights and liberties are never easily granted," Rangsiman Rome, one of the charged activists and protest group leaders, said at Saturday's demonstration in Bangkok that was joined by around 200 people. He said he would attend the next protest scheduled for Feb. 10, also in Bangkok.

Another charged activist, Anon Nampa, who is a civil rights lawyer, said Tuesday that he expects to receive a police summons via mail in the next few days, although he hasn't seen the official charges against him yet.

"The military dictatorship filed charges to arrest democracy activists on the grounds of violating the dictatorship's orders," Anon said in a Facebook

post Tuesday. "It's funny. Not only do these people have no shame, they're also confused and lost in their generation."

The other charged activists are also outspoken critics of the ruling junta: Sirawit Seritiwat, Nutta Mahatana, Netiwit Chotiphatphaisal, Ekachai Hongkangwan and Sukrid Peansuwan.

Sunai Phasuk, senior Thailand researcher for Human Rights Watch, said the charges show that the ruling junta has no intention of restoring democracy, which it said was its goal when it seized power.

"How can the junta claim they are leading Thailand to a restoration of democracy when a peaceful exercise of freedom of expression, freedom of assembly, and freedom of association are denied and exercising such rights is considered a serious crime of sedition?" Sunai said. "This shows the true colors of the junta, that they continue to act with dictatorial instincts."

Worst-hit reactor at Fukushima may be easiest to clean up

OKUMA, Japan (AP)—High atop Fukushima's most damaged nuclear reactor, the final pieces of a jelly-roll shaped cover are being put in place to seal in highly radioactive dust.

Blown apart by a hydrogen explosion in 2011 after an earthquake and tsunami hit Japan's Fukushima Dai-ichi plant, reactor Unit 3 is undergoing painstaking construction ahead of a milestone that is the first step toward dismantling the plant.

The operating floor—from where new fuel rods used to be lowered into the core—has been rebuilt and if all goes as planned, huge cranes will begin removing 566 sets of still-radioactive fuel rods from a storage pool just below it later this year.

It has taken seven years just to get this far, but now the real work of cleaning up the Tokyo Electric Power Co. plant can begin.

"If you compare it with mountain climbing, we've only been preparing to climb. Now, we finally get to actually start climbing," said Daisuke Hirose, an official at the plant's decommissioning and decontamination unit.

Cleaning up the plant's three reactors that had at least partial meltdowns after the earthquake and tsunami is a

monumental task expected to take three to four decades. Taking out the stored fuel rods is only a preliminary step and just removing the ones in Unit 3 is expected to take a year.

The severe damage to Unit 3 has, in the end, made it easier to clean up than the other two reactors.

Under the latest government roadmap approved last September, removal of the fuel rods from units 1 and 2 was delayed by three years until 2023, a second postponement from the original 2015, because further decontamination and additional safety measures are needed.

Unit 1 fell behind because of a delay in removing debris and repairing key components on the operating floor. The Unit 2 building remained intact, keeping high radiation and humidity inside, which makes it more difficult for workers to approach and decontaminate.

Radioactivity on the Unit 3 operating floor has fallen to a level that allows workers in hazmat suits and filter-masks to stay up to two hours at a time, though most work still needs to be done remotely.

The segments of the new cover were pre-assembled and are being installed one by one by remote-controlled cranes. With two pieces left, the plant operator says the cover will be completed in February.

World

Putin calls Russia list 'hostile' as Dems decry no sanctions

MOSCOW (AP)—Russian President Vladimir Putin described a list of his country's officials and tycoons put together to comply with a U.S. sanctions law as a hostile and "stupid" move spearheaded by President Donald Trump's political foes, but said Tuesday that the Kremlin would refrain from retaliating for now.

A continent away, Democrats in Washington lodged the opposite complaint, charging that Trump had let Putin off the hook. They chastised the president for declining to punish anyone under a part of the sanctions law that was intended to isolate Russia's defense and intelligence sectors for Moscow's alleged meddling in the 2016 election.

Putin's reluctance to criticize Trump suggested the Russian leader still harbors hopes for normalizing ties with the United States. At the same time, the blanket list of 210 names—a who's who of Russian officialdom and business elite—could help him win re-election in March by fueling anti-Western sentiment.

Mixing sarcasm and scorn, Putin immediately struck that chord Tuesday, saying that the people the



In this file photo dated Wednesday, Dec. 27, 2017, Russian opposition activist Alexei Navalny pauses, at the Echo Moskvy (Echo of Moscow) radio station in Moscow, Russia. AP

U.S. named control companies employing millions of Russians. The list has spooked rich Russians, who fear it could get them informally blacklisted in the global financial system. But Putin cast the action in Washington as a blow to ordinary people.

"All of us, all 146 million, have been put on some kind of list," he said at a meeting with activists for his election campaign. "Certainly, this is an unfriendly move, which further exacerbates the already strained Russia-U.S. relations and hurts international relations as a whole."

Yet in the U.S. capital, the so-called "Putin list" was greeted with a collective shrug—mocked by some after it was revealed that the Treasury Department had prepared it by simply copying and pasting Forbes' list of Russians worth \$1 billion or more.

Instead, Russia hawks and Trump's opponents were focused on why his administration opted not to punish anybody—at least for now—using new sanctions authority that took effect Monday.

Aid groups: 8,500 Syrians still held in Jordanian no-go camp

AZRAQ REFUGEE CAMP, Jordan (AP)—About 8,500 Syrians are still locked up behind barbed wire in a no-go section of Jordan's second-largest refugee camp—despite initial assurances in 2016 that the arrangement is temporary, a coalition of aid groups said.

The Jordan INGO Forum, an alliance of 60 non-governmental groups, asked Jordan to expedite security screenings, saying that at the current pace it would take until October 2020 to empty out Azraq camp's fenced-in "Village 5."

The forum also called on Jordan to lift other restrictions on Syrian refugees, including on movement from camps to Jordanian towns. It said close to half of Azraq's residents had been forcibly transferred there from elsewhere in Jordan, including refugees caught in police checks without proper papers.

Forum coordinator Yannick Martin said Tuesday that the international com-

munity must commend Jordan for its efforts in hosting refugees, but that "a frank dialogue needs to take place on continuous restrictions of movement that Syrian refugees face."

Jordanian Information Minister Mohammed Momani said security vetting is up to the task and that refugee camps were set up to allow international aid agencies to provide the best possible services.

About 20 percent of Jordan's 665,000 registered Syrian refugees live in three camps, the rest in host communities. Jordan says the actual number of Syrians in the kingdom is 1.3 million.

Jordan has said its policies are dictated by security concerns, including external and internal dangers posed by militants, mainly Islamic State extremists based in neighboring Syria and Iraq.

The kingdom sealed its border with Syria in June 2016, after a deadly cross-border attack by IS, leaving

tens of thousands of Syrians stranded in a remote desert area on Jordan's doorstep.

Jordan also argues that it shoulders a disproportionately heavy refugee burden, and that the international aid it receives routinely falls short of pledges made by donors.

"Jordan has taken more refugees than the whole continent of Europe," Momani said. "So it's really unjustified and unacceptable for anyone to question or criticize the way Jordan is dealing with the refugees which we think is second to none in comparison to all countries in the world."

Visiting European leaders have gone out of their way to praise Jordan's contribution, especially since a 2016 policy shift toward trying to encourage refugees to remain in the region and to slow their influx to Europe.

German President Frank-Walter Steinmeier echoed such views after a visit to Azraq on Monday.

Environment

Decades ago, Lake Michigan teemed with nutrients and green algae, casting a brownish-green hue that resembled the mouth of an inland river rather than a vast, open-water lake.

Back then, the lake's swampy complexion was less than inviting to swimmers and kayakers, but it supported a robust fishing industry as several companies trawled for perch, and sport fishermen cast their lines for trout. But in the past 20 years, Lake Michigan has undergone a dramatic transformation.

In analyzing satellite images between 1998 and 2012, researchers at the Michigan Tech Research Institute were surprised to find that lakes Michigan and Huron are now clearer than Lake Superior. In a study published last year, the researchers said limiting the amount of agricultural and sewage runoff in the lake has had an immense impact. However, the emergence of invasive mussels, which number in the trillions and have the ability to filter the entire volume of Lake Michigan in four to six days, has had an even greater effect.

"When you look at the scientific terms, we are approaching some oceanic values," said Michael Sayers, a research engineer at Michigan Technological University and co-author of the study. "We have some ways to go, but we are getting a lot closer to Lake Tahoe. A lot of times, you'll hear from people that the water is so blue it compares to something in tropical areas."

While appealing, the clarity comes at a significant cost to wildlife. In filtering the lake, the mussels have decimated the phytoplankton, a single-celled, green algae that serves as the base of the food chain. For much of the past decade, prey fish, like alewives, have remained at historic lows, prompting state managers to scale back the annual stocks of prized predators such as king salmon.

The startling evolution has called into question the future of Great Lakes marine life and the region's \$7 billion fishing industry.

"Clearer is not necessarily better," said Robert Shuchman, co-director of the Michigan Tech Research Institute. "Clearer water means less phytoplankton in the water column, and they're the basic building block in the food web. The idea is, the little fish eat algae, and the bigger fish eat the little fish."

"There are some folks out there now that think Lake



Rainbow trout in a "raceway" at the Jake Wolf Memorial Fish Hatchery located in Topeka, Ill. on Tuesday, July 18, 2017. In 2015, anglers and government scientists from Lake Michigan states said the chinook salmon population was plummeting. This year, though, it seems that the fish, also known as king salmon, are back in big numbers. What are the forces driving this trend, and how do states maintain a fishery in the world's fifth largest lake?

TNS

Lake Michigan has become much clearer in 20 years, but at great cost

By TONY BRISCOE

Chicago Tribune

Michigan and Huron could become ecological deserts from a fishing standpoint. The food web could totally collapse because you don't have the various organisms you need to sustain it."

For ages, the phytoplankton fed the zooplankton, which were eaten by small, foraging fish. As the fast-filtering mussels reduce the plankton populations, there isn't enough food to support the diet of many foraging fish. In addition, there's not enough plankton or nutrients clouding the water to hide these small prey fish from predator fish.

"It's a game of hide-and-seek in a brightly lit environment," said Henry Vanderploeg, a research ecologist for the National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration.

After years of working aboard a relative's charter boat, Rick Bentley was leaving the fishing industry in the early 1990s to pursue a career in finance when the mussels began arriving.

"A lot of people were sounding massive alarms about how the mussels could change everything," Bentley said. "When I came back 10 years ago, many of the

Their fears turned out to be prophetic. As the water cleared up, the fish cleared out. Since the introduction of the mussels, there's been a sharp decline in nearly all fish species in Lake Michigan, including king salmon, scientists say.

At the height of king salmon fishing in the mid- to late-1980s, around 10 million pounds of the fish were harvested from the lake each year, according to research by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and agencies from four states. In recent years, fishermen are managing to catch only about 3 million pounds.

Despite the drop, Bentley, who had fond memories of fishing's heyday, returned to the lake in 2007 with his charter company, Windy City Salmon. The passion from his fishing days brought him back, but to survive, Bentley said, fishermen have to change their age-old techniques.

"As a captain, fisherman and a businessman who wants to put out a good product, I know the lake is adapting, and we need to adapt with it," Bentley said. "When I came back 10 years ago, many of the

captains I knew were winding down their careers, ready to hang it up. Some adapted. Some of them stayed in their old ways, and their catches tended to suffer."

King salmon are low-light-feeding fish, so with sunlight reaching into lower depths, it's become increasingly difficult to catch them during midday hours, Bentley said. He's found fishing at dawn and sundown provides the best chance to catch salmon.

The clearer waters have made flashers and dodgers, devices that reflect light and attract fish, more effective tools, Bentley said. Still, remaining undetected is a challenge.

"Generally, fish are more likely to keep their distance because they can see the boat and gear now," he said.

Over the years, the Great Lakes have endured numerous encounters with invasive species. The mussels may be the worst Lake Michigan has seen since the sea lamprey, an eel-like parasitic fish that slithered into the Upper Great Lakes in the 1940s through the Erie and Welland canals, accord-

ing to David "Bo" Bunnell, a research fishery biologist at the U.S. Geological Survey's Great Lakes Science Center. Sea lampreys latched onto large fish and drained their blood, leading to a collapse in populations of native predators like lake trout.

"They pretty much devastated native lake trout, lake whitefish and other native species that were already suffering from overfishing," Bunnell said. "That was the one-two death punch."

Without predators, the population of alewives, another nonnative species that came through the canals around the same time, went unchecked. Though they were abundant, the saltwater fish, already weakened from living in freshwater, befouled local beaches in spring die-offs after being exposed to higher temperature fluctuations when they came close to shore to spawn.

In the 1960s, coastal managers introduced two species of Pacific salmon to contain the alewives and boost fishing: coho and king. The king salmon brought the alewives under control and quickly be-

came a favorite of sport fishermen.

"They get the biggest, they're a very strong fish and they offer a helluva fight. They're a 20-pound class fish, so they take 8 or 9 yards off the reel, and it might take 15 to 20 minutes to bring them in," Bentley said.

The arrival of zebra and quagga mussels led to the collapse of alewives and king salmon in Lake Huron in the early 2000s. Scientists say the crash in alewives stemmed from less food availability and more predation by the king salmon, which was stocked by the Michigan Department of Natural Resources and naturally reproducing. The king salmon diet is almost exclusively made up of alewives.

The Lake Huron king salmon, emaciated as their favorite prey became harder to find, migrated to Lake Michigan in search of alewives.

Nearly two decades later, the same progression is happening in Lake Michigan.

"There's an old Chinese saying, 'When there is crystal-clear water, there is no fish,'" said Yu-Chun Kao, a post-doctoral scientist at Michigan State University.

For a doctoral dissertation at the University of Michigan, Kao examined Lake Huron's king salmon collapse, concluding that the fishery that once existed likely won't ever return to its glory days because of the alewife shortage.

Last year, Kao ran hundreds of computer simulations to consider changes in mussels, nutrients and fish stocking in Lake Michigan. His study suggested that Lake Michigan might be better suited for lake trout and steelhead, given the two species of trout can switch from eating alewives to bottom-dwelling round goby, an invasive prey fish that eats cladophora and tiny quagga mussels.

The king salmon, he found, is the most susceptible to changes driven by the mussels, meaning its numbers will likely continue to decline as the mussels continue to spread. But there's still a chance Lake Michigan could support a substantial salmon population if stocking is reduced to alleviate pressure on the struggling alewife population.

Lake Superior may have relinquished its title of clearest of the Great Lakes, but it also doesn't have the same vulnerabilities to some invasive species as the other lakes. It has staved off the mussel migration because it's colder and there's less calcium in its water, a mineral the mussels need to make their shells.

Life & Style

Amid publicity tour, porn star denies affair with Trump

NEW YORK (AP)—Adult film star Stormy Daniels, in the midst of a publicity tour fueled by past allegations of a 2006 sexual relationship with a then-married Donald Trump, said in a statement Tuesday the alleged affair never occurred.

A lawyer for Daniels, whose real name is Stephanie Clifford, confirmed the statement was authentic but didn't offer any further details.

The statement comes at a curious time for Clifford, who is scheduled to appear following the president's State of the Union address on ABC's "Jimmy Kimmel Live!" In recent weeks she has changed production companies, given a television interview and pro-



In this Feb. 11, 2007, file photo, Stormy Daniels arrives for the 49th Annual Grammy Awards in Los Angeles.

AP

moted strip club appearances with a risqué play on Trump's "Make America Great Again" campaign slogan.

Michael Cohen, Trump's personal lawyer, has denied there was any affair.

Clifford's allegation, first made in 2011 and then again a month before the election, went mostly unnoticed until The Wall Street Journal reported earlier this month that Cohen brokered a \$130,000 payment to Clifford to keep her from publicly discussing it.

A week after that report, In Touch magazine printed a 5,000-word interview it conducted with Clifford in 2011 but never published after Co-

hen threatened the tabloid with a lawsuit, The Associated Press has previously reported.

In that interview, Clifford described a single sexual encounter with Trump in 2006, when he was recently married to his third wife, Melania, as well as a subsequent years-long relationship with the reality TV star. The magazine said it corroborated her account with friends and said she passed a lie detector test.

In her statement Tuesday, Clifford said she wasn't denying the affair because she was paid "hush money," but rather "because it never happened."

Neither Cohen nor Clifford has addressed whether she was paid \$130,000, or if so, why.

A publicist didn't respond to questions about the statement Tuesday.

Actor Mark Salling dies weeks after child porn guilty plea

LOS ANGELES (AP)—Mark Salling, who played bad-boy Noah "Puck" Puckerman in the hit musical-comedy "Glee," died of an apparent suicide Tuesday, weeks after pleading guilty to possessing child pornography. He was 35.

Salling pleaded guilty in December after authorities said a search of his computer and a thumb drive found more than 50,000 images of child porn. He was scheduled to be sentenced March 7, and prosecutors planned to ask a judge to send him to prison for four to seven years.

A law enforcement official not authorized to speak publicly said Salling was found hanging in a riverbed area in the Tujunga neighborhood of Los Angeles. Ed Winter, assistant chief investigator for the Los Angeles County coroner's office, said the death is being investigated as a suicide.

Winter said Salling was pronounced dead at 9 a.m.

Tuesday, six hours after police received a report that he was missing.

"Mark was a gentle and loving person, a person of great creativity, who was doing his best to atone for some serious mistakes and errors of judgment," Salling's attorney, Michael J. Proctor, said in an email to The Associated Press.

Proctor didn't discuss the cause of death, but said the actor's family appreciated the support it is receiving and asked that a request for privacy be respected.

The darkly handsome actor had appeared in only a handful of projects before his breakout role in "Glee," the popular Fox TV series about students in a high school glee club and their circle of family and friends. It aired from 2009-15.

Earlier credits included 1996's "Children of the Corn



Salling

IV: The Gathering," a 1999 guest role on the Chuck Norris series "Walker, Texas Ranger" and a part in the 2014 TV movie "Rocky Road."

A singer-songwriter as well as actor, he released two albums: "Smoke Signals" in 2008 and "Pipe Dreams" in 2010.

Following "Pipe Dreams," release, Salling told The Associated Press he had been a singer-songwriter long before he became an actor.

"I put out a record before. It went triple cardboard," he joked. "I was very excited about selling 125 units for that but you know this is something I've been doing my whole life. It's not something that I just decided to randomly do now. This is not the first. It won't be the last. And I hope people enjoy it and have something to look forward to for

the next round."

He said he chose the album's songs from 50 to 60 he had compiled over several years.

Salling's character on "Glee" was a member of the school's football team who ends up joining the glee club. One of his character's friends was another jock-turned-singer, Finn Hudson, who was played by Cory Monteith.

Monteith died in 2013 from a toxic mix of alcohol and heroin, according to a coroner's finding.

Mark Wayne Salling was born Aug. 17, 1982, in Dallas, the youngest child of John Salling, an accountant, and his wife, Condy, a school secretary.

Like his character on "Glee," Salling was a jock, taking part in wrestling, rugby, basketball and other school sports when he wasn't playing guitar or piano. By high school he was playing gigs in local bars.

"And what he said was: 'Screw you,'" the judge said of DMX's response to conditions set last summer so DMX could continue a rigorous concert schedule while facing charges he had evaded \$1.7 million in taxes.

DMX, 47, whose songs include the 2003 hit "X Gon' Give It to Ya," pleaded guilty in November to tax fraud. He faces up to five years in prison.

The Internal Revenue Service had pursued DMX since at least 2005 after concluding he dodged taxes owed on millions of dollars in income amassed from 2002 through 2005 as his hip-hop records sold millions. Authorities said he insisted on being paid cash whenever possible and diverted royalty payments to the accounts of

others, including managers.

DMX, who arrived late for three consecutive court appearances, wore down the patience of a judge with a reputation for being compassionate about issues facing defendants.

Promises by DMX to continue drug rehabilitation and to be accompanied by a drug counselor during travel so he could continue his career "was a great big lie, a repeated lie as it turned out," Rakoff said.

"His activity shows he is a genuine flight risk in ways I hoped weren't true," the judge said.

After the judge adjourned the hearing, DMX prepared for incarceration, lifting off his sweatshirt to reveal a shirt with a smiley face and a peace sign on it. He turned over a wad of cash with \$100 bills on the outside to a friend before he was led away in handcuffs.

Defense lawyer Murray Richman had argued for his continued freedom, saying Simmons took drugs to cope with the hospitalization of his year-old daughter for several days this month when she had a 104-degree fever.

Richman said Simmons left a drug rehabilitation program in the Northeast to see his daughter in New York City.

"He deals with problems by drugging himself," the lawyer said.

Assistant U.S. Attorney Joshua Naftalis told Rakoff that the issue wasn't the use of drugs so much as the failure of DMX to follow court orders.

Justin Timberlake Super Bowl bash upsets some Prince fans

NEW YORK (AP)—At least one Prince superfan hopes the late superstar's Paisley Park jacked up the price to rent out his former home and studio outside Minneapolis for a Justin Timberlake party ahead of the Super Bowl.

"That's probably what Prince would have done with Justin being there," laughed Jeremiah Freed, known as Dr. Funkenberry in the fandom.

The idea of Timberlake being allowed at the Chanhassen mecca has upset some fans still mourning the Purple One, as has the idea of Prince's 65,000-square-foot spread be-

ing granted a temporary liquor license for the duration of Super Bowl mania.

But Freed, who hosts a Prince podcast out of Los Angeles, isn't terribly bothered. Paisley was turned into a museum after Prince died of an accidental drug overdose in April 2016 and his urn is displayed in the front room atrium, far from the Timberlake listening session's presumed location.

"I think the fans are just worried that they're going to be walking around Paisley and they're going to get wine on the carpet or wine on one

of the displays. I imagine it would be just how it was in the past, in the soundstage area only for drinks," Freed told The Associated Press in a recent interview.

Despite Prince's no-alcohol reputation, there have been liquor licenses issued for Paisley in the past, including one for an event planned by Prince himself for the month after he died, Freed said.

Dennis Roszkowski, at 61 a top Prince memorabilia collector outside Detroit and a former correspondent for a British-based fan magazine called "Controversy," said that

among some fans, "emotions are still playing out."

"It's like our home. We don't want anything to happen to it," he said of the unease over the Super Bowl event.

Sherry Stacy, 47, grew up in Detroit and has loved Prince since she was 8.

"I think it's very rude (to allow alcohol) and it goes against everything Prince was about," she said. "Prince did his thing without drinking and people had fun without it when he would play there. It seems like it's all for the wrong reasons, not to honor the man."

Weinstein attorney: McGowan's rape allegations 'a bold lie'

LOS ANGELES (AP)—A lawyer for Harvey Weinstein on Tuesday called actress Rose McGowan's claims of rape against the former Hollywood producer "a bold lie."

Attorney Ben Brafman wrote in a statement that McGowan is trying to smear Weinstein to promote her new

book "Brave."

McGowan details her allegations against Weinstein in the memoir released Tuesday. She said in the book that the producer forced himself on her during what began as Weinstein



a business meeting at

the Sundance Film Festival in 1997.

Scores of women

have publicly ac-

cused Weinstein of

sexual harassment or

assault.

Brafman's state-

ment says Weinstein

and his attorneys

"have refrained from publicly criticizing any of the women who have made allegations of sexual assault against Mr. Weinstein despite a wealth of evidence that would demonstrate the patent fal-



McGowan

sity of these claims.

"Watching the 'performance' by Rose McGowan as she looks to promote her new book however, has made it impossible to remain quiet," the statement said.

Brafman says Weinstein denies McGowan's claims. The attorney also cites correspon-

dence from "two witnesses"

to corroborate his client's po-

sition: Entertainment manager

Jill Messick and Oscar winner

Ben Affleck.

The statement released through crisis management firm Sitrick & Co. also included several photos of McGowan looking cordial with Weinstein at an industry event in 2005.

McGowan responded on Twitter late Tuesday by calling out Weinstein by name, which she had pointedly refrained from doing.

"It is you (who) did this to us," she wrote.

A representative for Affleck did not immediately respond to a request for comment.

Israelis sue New Zealanders over Lorde boycott

J E R U S A L E M

(AP)—An Israeli legal rights group said Wednesday it is suing two New Zealanders for allegedly convincing the pop singer Lorde to cancel her performance



Lorde

plied to a tweet of the letter saying "Noted! Been speaking (with) many people about this and considering all options. Thank u for educating me i am learning all the time too." She canceled her show days later.

The group, Shurat HaDin, claims the New Zealanders, one Jewish and one Palestinian, knew that their letter could trigger a boycott, making them open to a suit under the law. The group, which filed the lawsuit in a Jerusalem court on Tuesday, is suing on behalf of three Israeli would-be concertgoers for about \$13,000 in damages.

"This lawsuit is an effort to give real consequences to those who selectively target Israel and seek to impose damages against defendants. Critics said the law would stifle free expression.

The two New Zealanders, Justine Sachs and Nadia Abu-Shanab, penned an open letter to Lorde last year in which they urged her to "take a stand" and "join the artistic boycott of Israel." The New Zealand singer-songwriter re-

lated that their letter could trigger a boycott, making them open to a suit under the law. The group, which filed the lawsuit in a Jerusalem court on Tuesday, is suing on behalf of three Israeli would-be concertgoers for about \$13,000 in damages.

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SHOWBIZ TIDBITS

Group asks Justin Timberlake to keep halftime show 'safe'

NEW YORK (AP)—A watchdog group is politely pleading with Justin Timberlake to keep his Super Bowl halftime show "safe for the children watching." In an open letter to the entertainer issued Tuesday, the Parents Television Council hopes there isn't a repeat of what happened in 2004 when Timberlake ripped Janet Jackson's costume to reveal her right breast. The group writes that it hopes Timberlake will keep the halftime show "friendly and safe" for the children watching, especially since some will want to emulate the singer. Timberlake has assured viewers "That won't happen this time." The infamous wardrobe malfunction drew CBS a \$550,000 fine from the Federal Communications Commission that was later overturned. The watchdog group says it wants "a positive, uplifting and entertaining halftime show on Sunday."

Nicole Eggert claims co-star Scott Baio sexually abused her

NEW YORK (AP)—Nicole Eggert claims her former "Charles in Charge" co-star Scott Baio sexually abused her for years starting when

she was 14. Speaking on "Megyn Kelly Today" on Tuesday, Eggert said Baio first molested her when she was 14 and they had sexual intercourse when she was 17. Baio is more than 11 years older than Eggert. The age of consent in California is 18. Baio in a previous Facebook Live video says he is being falsely accused and says he and Eggert had a consensual relationship after she was over the age of 18. Eggert says she is exploring all legal options and is considering filing a police report. A representative for Baio didn't immediately respond to The Associated Press.

Massachusetts gambling regulators to review Wynn allegations

BOSTON (AP)—Massachusetts gambling regulators are holding a special meeting to discuss sexual misconduct allegations against casino magnate Steve Wynn, whose company is building a \$2.4 billion casino outside Boston. The Massachusetts Gaming Commission will receive an update on an investigation Wednesday. Republican Gov. Charlie Baker says if the allegations are true, Wynn would "fail to meet the suitability standard under the

state gaming law." The Wall Street Journal reported Friday that a number of women said they were harassed or assaulted by Wynn, and that one case led to a \$7.5 million settlement. The 76-year-old Wynn has denied the allegations. Under the 2011 casino law, a license is considered a "revocable privilege," and can be suspended or revoked if a licensee is found "unsuitable to operate a gaming establishment."

Meryl Streep, Debbie Harry named to New Jersey Hall of Fame

TRENTON, N.J. (AP)—Academy Award winner Meryl Streep, former New York Yankees pitcher Al Leiter (LY'-tur) and E Street Band member Steven Van Zandt are among the 20 newest members of the New Jersey Hall of Fame. The class of 2017 also includes singers Debbie Harry and Frankie Valli and "Cake Boss" reality TV star Buddy Valastro for the performing arts. Authors Harlan Coben and Anna Quindlen represent arts and letters. The inductees for public service are astronauts Mark and Scott Kelly, late Republican Rep. Millicent Fenwick and Army nurse Clara Maass, who died as a result of volunteering for medical experiments to study

yellow fever. Other class members are real estate developer Jon Hanson, magazine publisher Steve Forbes, politician Joe Buckelew and running champion Mary Decker. All will be inducted during a ceremony in May.

Late poet Helen Dunmore's collection wins Costa book prize

LONDON (AP)—A poetry collection by the late British writer Helen Dunmore has won the lucrative Costa book prize. "Inside the Wave" was published two months before the poet and novelist died of cancer last year at age 64 and reflects on the intertwined worlds of life and death. Author Wendy Holden, who chaired the judging panel, on Tuesday called the collection "life affirming and uplifting." Open to writers based in Britain and Ireland, the Costa prizes are awarded in five categories, with one chosen as the overall book of the year. Dunmore's poems beat four other finalists for the 30,000-pound (\$42,000) prize: Gail Honeyman's debut novel "Eleanor Oliphant is Completely Fine"; Rebecca Stott's memoir "In the Days of Rain"; John McGregor's novel "Reservoir 13" and children's book "The Explorer" by Katherine Rundell.

Graduate longs to distance himself from family strife

DEAR ABBY: I'm an 18-year-old guy who's having troubles regarding my family. My parents are divorced, and I moved out of my mom's house after I graduated.

After the divorce, I flipped back and forth between living with either Mom or Dad. I moved into my mother's after an argument with my stepmom, who insists that I call her "Mother." I don't consider her my mother. My father is an alcoholic and was completely impaired when he married her. I've never forgiven him. When I visit, I can't help but feel no longer welcome.

My mother (a hypocritical tiger mom) made my high school career so stressful it pushed me into severe depression, so I spoke to a doctor who prescribed medication for me and gave me therapist referrals. Since I moved out, I've never been happier.

My siblings and I have never been close, other than at times when we needed someone to talk to about our parental situation.

I have been thinking about disappearing and starting a new life on my own with no thought of my family past. I'm not sure if it's worth fixing the mess my family has become. Advice?

BREAKING AWAY

DEAR BREAKING: For your stepmother to demand that you call her "Mother" was wrong. She is not and never will be your mother. (Besides, you already have one

of those.) For your mother to have pushed you to succeed academically is normal when a parent thinks her child has potential that isn't being realized. That she was so heavy-handed that it had the opposite effect is very sad.

If you would like to move away and start a new life, no one can stop you. At 18, you are considered an adult. But I do NOT think it would be healthy for you to do it in anger and without mending fences, if that's possible. Running away will not have the effect you're looking for because your family will still be living in your head.

DEAR ABBY: I believe my wife is egocentric. She has five framed pictures of herself around the house. Even the wallpaper on her tablet is of herself. If we have a disagreement about anything, she won't talk to me for days unless I break the ice. It's ruining our 2 1/2-year marriage. Any suggestions?

MYSTIFIED IN THE SOUTH

DEAR MYSTIFIED: Yes, be less quick to judge her because of the photos she keeps around the house. The reason may have less to do with egocentrism than insecurity.

What's destroying your marriage isn't the pictures; it's your wife's inability to fight fair. Her silent treatment is emotionally abusive; it's not a healthy way to solve a dis-

DEAR ABBY

By ABIGAIL VAN BUREN
UNIVERSAL PRESS SYNDICATE

Dear Abby is written by Abigail Van Buren, also known as Jeanne Phillips, and was founded by her mother, Pauline Phillips. Contact Dear Abby at www.DearAbby.com or P.O. Box 69440, Los Angeles, CA 90069.



agreement. A licensed marriage and family therapist may be able to help the two of you communicate more effectively. If your wife won't agree to it, go alone.

DEAR ABBY: Should I marry someone who doesn't love me more than anyone in this world?

JIM IN VIRGINIA

DEAR JIM: I think that depends on who else the person loves.

To receive a collection of Abby's most memorable – and most frequently requested – poems and essays, send your name and mailing address, plus check or money order for \$7 (U.S. funds) to: Dear Abby – Keepers Booklet, P.O. Box 447, Mount Morris, IL 61054-0447. Shipping and handling are included in the price.

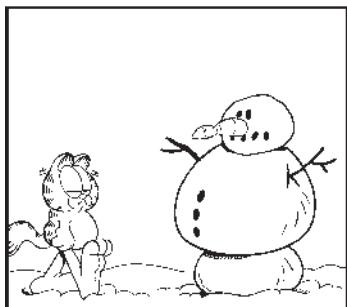
Pastimes

Calvin and Hobbes



By Bill Waterson

Garfield®



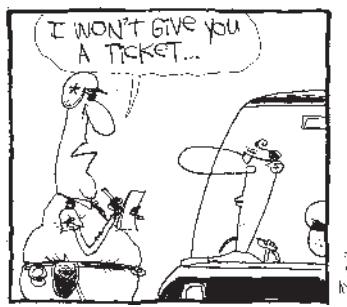
By Jim Davis

Adam@home



By Bryan Basset

The Duplex



By Glenn McCoy

CROSSWORD

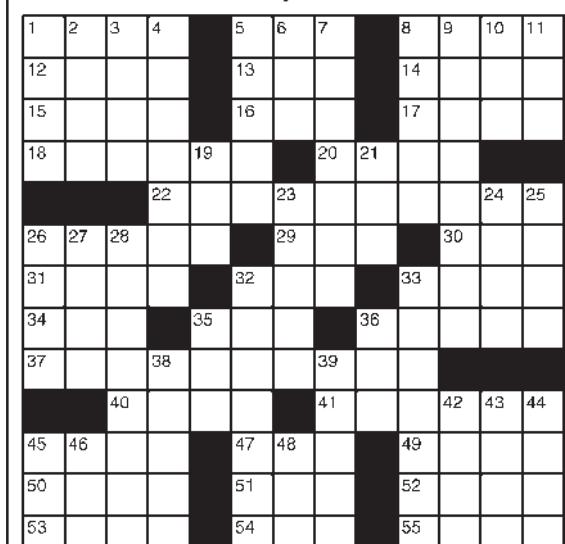
By Eugene Sheffer

ACROSS	37	Post-	DOWN	23	Capital
1	Office part-timer	nuptial holidays	1 "I did it!"	of Japan	Styles, 24; Ronda Rousey, 31; Big Boi, 43; Michael C. Hall, 47.
5	Favorite	40 Swiss artist Paul	2 Satan's forte	24 Alaskan city	Happy Birthday: Take your time. Reacting too quickly this year will lead to mistakes, regret and having to buckle down and rethink the best way to move forward. Don't follow the crowd or get caught in a lifestyle that is excessive or not right for you. Set long-term goals and plan the most efficient way to reach your destination. Your numbers are 9, 12, 22, 25, 36, 40, 48.
8	"So be it"	41 Architectural style	3 Bistro handout	25 Soaks (up)	ARIES (March 21-April 19): Use past experience to help you get ahead. Make physical changes that will boost your confidence and empower you to reach your goals. Love and romance are on the rise. Network, socialize and enjoy what life has to offer. ★★★★
12	Say it's so	42 Costa —	4 Cues	26 Ham's dad	TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You'll be tempted to make changes that aren't realistic. Take better care of your health and refrain from overspending or being excessive in any way. Problems with a personal relationship will need to be handled carefully. ★★
13	— de cologne	45 Hum-dinger	5 Pie nut	27 Shakespearean villain	GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Speak up and you will attract an audience that listens and contributes. Give a thorough explanation along with a demonstration and you will win the support you need to move forward. Romance and personal growth are highlighted. ★★★
14	Grassy area	47 Costa —	6 Nosh	28 "Queen of Soul" Aretha	CANCER (June 21-July 22): You can make a difference if you lend a helping hand to an organization or friend that needs assistance. Your input will give you leverage when you want something in return. Offer
15	Flint-stones' pet	49 Waikiki's island	7 Pisa's region	32 Eventually	SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Problems at home will develop if you lack moderation or are dealing with someone who doesn't handle money well. Joint ventures are not in your best interest. Stress will mount if you don't address an emotional situation quickly. ★★
16	Dol. fractions	50 During	8 Memorable mission	33 High school course	SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Physical changes to the way you look will turn out well. Love and romance will change the way you live. Social events and getting together with people who share your interests will lead to interesting partnerships. ★★★★
17	From the start	51 Noshed	9 Work force	35 "See ya!"	AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Look inward and make decisions based on your needs. This is not the time to get involved in someone else's battles. Set your own path and do whatever it takes to be true to your principles, goals and beliefs. ★★★
18	Wellesley grad	52 Frat letters	10 Ram's ma'am	36 Yucatan year	PISCES (Feb. 19-March 20): Emotional spending or taking on too much debt should be nixed before it's too late and you are unable to dig your way out. Don't hire someone to do something you don't need or want to have done. ★★★
20	Bivouac	53 Glazier's sheet	11 SSE's opposite	38 Dodge	Birthday Baby: You are charming, popular and helpful. You are outgoing and generous.
22	Old-style trousers	54 "Certainly!"	19 Opposing vote	39 Leers at	To submit astrological questions to the "Dear Eugenia" column, visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.
26	Swell	55 Puppy barks	21 Hearty brew	42 "Funny!"	LEO (July 23-Aug. 22): Put more into whatever jobs you've been handed. Those you partner with personally or professionally will have high expectations. Mixed emotions will surface if you don't lay down ground rules. It's important to divide up jobs equally. ★★★
29	Inseparable			43 Denny's rival	VIRGO (Aug. 23-Sept. 22): Keep track of what everyone around you is doing. Being fully prepared to discuss important details in advance of a plan will help you avoid being held responsible for something you didn't do. Don't take on more than you can handle. ★★★
30	Romance			44 Swear	LIBRA (Sept. 23-Oct. 22): Don't trust everything you hear. One of your peers will offer false information that can cost you financially. An opportunity someone offers you will not be a good fit. Do your own thing and trust in your abilities. ★★★
31	Galley supply			45 Napkin's place	TAURUS (April 20-May 20): You'll be tempted to make changes that aren't realistic. Take better care of your health and refrain from overspending or being excessive in any way. Problems with a personal relationship will need to be handled carefully. ★★
32	Blue hue			46 Ms. Thurman	GEMINI (May 21-June 20): Speak up and you will attract an audience that listens and contributes. Give a thorough explanation along with a demonstration and you will win the support you need to move forward. Romance and personal growth are highlighted. ★★★
33	Rope fiber			48 Tours season	CANCER (June 21-July 22): You can make a difference if you lend a helping hand to an organization or friend that needs assistance. Your input will give you leverage when you want something in return. Offer
34	Khan title				SCORPIO (Oct. 23-Nov. 21): Problems at home will develop if you lack moderation or are dealing with someone who doesn't handle money well. Joint ventures are not in your best interest. Stress will mount if you don't address an emotional situation quickly. ★★
35	Lad				SAGITTARIUS (Nov. 22-Dec. 21): Physical changes to the way you look will turn out well. Love and romance will change the way you live. Social events and getting together with people who share your interests will lead to interesting partnerships. ★★★★
36	Buenos				AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Look inward and make decisions based on your needs. This is not the time to get involved in someone else's battles. Set your own path and do whatever it takes to be true to your principles, goals and beliefs. ★★★

Solution time: 24 mins.



Yesterday's answer 2-1



For answers to today's crossword, call 1-900-226-5955! 99¢ per minute, touch-tone/rotary phones. (18+ only.) A King Features service, NYC.

STUMPED?

CELEBRITIES BORN ON THIS DAY:

Harry Styles, 24; Ronda Rousey, 31; Big Boi, 43; Michael C. Hall, 47.

Happy Birthday: Take your time. Reacting too quickly this year will lead to mistakes, regret and having to buckle down and rethink the best way to move forward. Don't follow the crowd or get caught in a lifestyle that is excessive or not right for you. Set long-term goals and plan the most efficient way to reach your destination. Your numbers are 9, 12, 22, 25, 36, 40, 48.

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suggestions and hands-on help, not cash. ★★★

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Birthday Baby: You are charming, popular and helpful. You are outgoing and generous.

EUGENIA LAST

THE LAST WORD IN ASTROLOGY

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CAPRICORN (Dec. 22-Jan. 19): You may feel the need to pay more attention to the way you look, but don't feel the need to overspend in order to impress someone. It's what you do, not how you look that will make the biggest difference. ★★★

AQUARIUS (Jan. 20-Feb. 18): Look inward and make decisions based on your needs. This is not the time to get involved in someone else's battles. Set your own path and do whatever it takes to be true to your principles, goals and beliefs. ★★★

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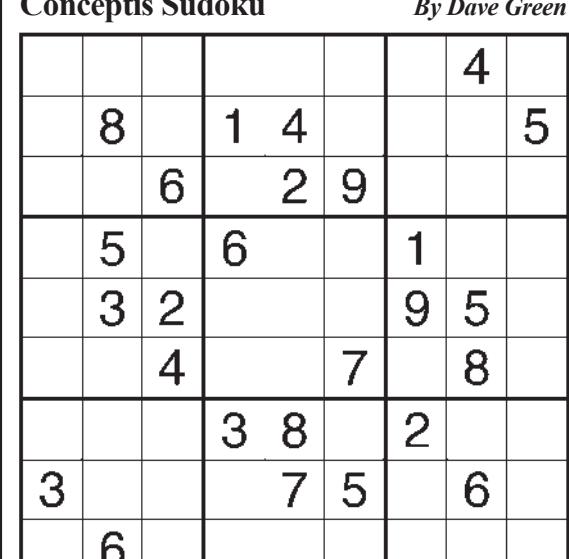
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To submit astrological questions to the "Dear Eugenia" column, visit Eugenialast.com, or join Eugenia on Twitter/Facebook/LinkedIn.

SUDOKU

Conceptis Sudoku

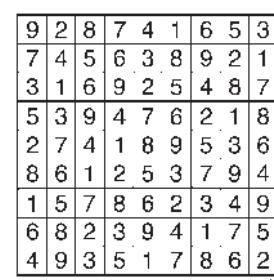
By Dave Green



Difficulty Level ★★★

Sudoku is a number-placing puzzle based on a 9x9 grid with several given numbers. The object is to place the numbers 1 to 9 in the empty squares so that each row, each column and each 3x3 box contains the same number only once. The difficulty level of the Conceptis Sudoku increases from Monday to Saturday.

Yesterday's Answer



Difficulty Level ★★★

WONDERWORD

By DAVID OUELLET

HOW TO PLAY: All the words listed below appear in the puzzle — horizontally, vertically, diagonally and even backward. Find them, circle each letter of the word and strike it off the list. The leftover letters spell the WONDERWORD.

FORBES MAGAZINE

Solution: 6 letters

F	E	Y	S	U	B	C	L	I	A	T	R	M	R
U	A	C	G	E	A	R	V	O	I	C	E	A	A
N	T	C	N	M	U	T	A	L	T	R	N	L	I
D	R	P	T	E	A	A	L	C	L	K	D	K	C
S	A	H	N	N	I	X	A	A	E	A	T	I	O
O	V	A	E	E	D	C	W	T	L	J	E	N	L
P	E	R	M	R	R	E	V	S	L	A	M	G	M
E	L	M	M	G	P	M	M	I	S	H	S	O	T
C	D</td												

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Job Vacancy Announcement

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WHATZIT?

GIN ALE RUM HOW HOW HOW

[www](#)

Chiefs agree to trade Smith to Redskins



WASHINGTON (AP)—Kansas City has agreed to trade quarterback Alex Smith to Washington, a move that spells the end of Kirk Cousins' time with the Redskins and hands the Chiefs' job to Patrick Mahomes.

Two people with direct knowledge of the deal confirmed the move to The Associated Press on Tuesday night on condition of anonymity because the transaction can't be completed until the start of the new league year in March. One person told the AP the Redskins had agreed to a four-year extension with Smith, who had one year left on his contract.

Smith, who turns 34 in May, spent the past five seasons with the Chiefs, leading them to the playoffs four times while throwing for 102 touchdowns and 33 interceptions. He carries a \$17 million salary-cap hit for 2018.

Kansas City saves cap space and can turn to Mahomes, the 10th pick in last year's draft out of Texas Tech, as its new starter.

Smith becomes Washington's new franchise quarterback after throwing for 31,888 yards and 183 touchdowns in 12 NFL seasons with the San Francisco 49ers and Chiefs.

Smith is "one of the best competitors and teammates I've ever been around," Chiefs tight end Travis Kelce posted on Twitter. "Someone who I owe a lot of my success to, and a guy that's been a class act through all the ups n downs."

The Redskins acquired Smith



AP

AFC quarterback Alex Smith (11) of the Kansas City Chiefs looks to pass during the first half of the NFL Pro Bowl football game against the NFC, Sunday, Jan. 28, 2018, in Orlando, Fla.

and signed him to the kind of long-term deal they balked at with Cousins, who became the first QB to play back-to-back seasons on the franchise tag. Cousins can become a free agent next month at age 29.

"Nothing really surprises me anymore," Redskins tight end Niles Paul tweeted. Former Redskins QB Robert Griffin III tweeted: "Some how...Some way...they will

blame this on me. No doubt." Cousins, drafted by the Redskins in the fourth round out of Michigan State in 2012 -- the same year they traded up to Griffin with the No 2 pick--likely leaves Washington with the fourth-most passing yards in franchise history, more than 16,000.

Under coach Jay Gruden, Cousins became the first Redskins QB to start all 16 games

for three consecutive seasons. He threw for at least 4,000 yards in each, while totaling 81 touchdowns and 36 interceptions. But Washington only played in one playoff game during that span, going 9-7, 8-7-1 and, most recently, 7-9 in Cousins' time as a starter.

Cousins has been the biggest question hovering over Washington's offseason—and, indeed, hovering over

the whole organization for a couple of years as the team failed to sign him to a long-term deal.

According to ESPN, Washington is sending a third-round draft pick and cornerback Kendall Fuller to Kansas City in the trade, which cannot be finalized until March 14. The Kansas City Star first reported the deal.

This is the second time a

team coached by Andy Reid has traded a 33-year-old QB to the Redskins. Reid's Philadelphia Eagles dealt Donovan McNabb to Washington in 2010 for second- and third-round picks.

Meanwhile, in New York, Buffalo Bills coach Sean McDermott continues shuffling his staff by hiring former Houston Texans defensive backs coach John Butler to replace Gill Byrd, who was fired after one season.

Butler spent the past four seasons in the same role with the Texans before being fired after their season ended. He previously worked as a coach at the college level and has ties to McDermott. Both grew up in the Philadelphia area and played on the same high school football team.

Byrd is out despite overseeing a talented defensive backfield that accounted for 17 of Buffalo's 18 interceptions. Safeties Jordan Poyer and Micah Hyde had five each, while rookie first-round pick Tre'Davious White had four.

This is the latest change McDermott has made to his staff even though Buffalo ended a 17-season playoff drought.

Offensive coordinator Rick Dennison was fired and replaced by Brian Daboll. Defensive line coach Mike Waufle retired.

for running backs.

Blount was vocal about his desire to stay in New England, but the Patriots signed Mike Gillislee. Blount took a one-year deal with the Eagles, where he has had a good season and been a leader.

Amendola restructured his contract to remain with New England this season. With Julian Edelman out for the season with a knee injury, Amendola has stepped up, leading the team with 196 yards receiving and two touchdowns in the playoffs.

At 32, he will also enter free agency this summer.

Lewis is in the second year of a two-year deal and becomes an unrestricted free agent in the offseason. Chung, who turns 31 this summer, is signed through 2018.

Chung said he's always admired Belichick's no-nonsense approach to football. When reports came out about Belichick possibly considering retirement, Chung joked that his future was linked to that of his coach.

BLOOMINGTON, Minn. (AP)—New England Patriots star tight end Rob Gronkowski says he expects to play in Sunday's Super Bowl against the Philadelphia Eagles.

Gronkowski has been in the league's concussion protocol after taking a hit from Jacksonville's Barry Church in the AFC championship game. He made his first public appearance on Tuesday night while playing former teammate and current Eagles running back LeGarrette Blount in a game of "Madden 18" at the Mall of America.

Gronkowski said he's still in the concussion protocol and would leave his status up to those in charge of making medical decisions.

"Hopefully by (Wednesday)," he said. "We'll see how it goes. I'm not the guy to say I'm out of the protocol. That's the doctors' calls."

Gronkowski led the Patriots with 69 receptions for 1,084 yards and eight touchdowns this season. He missed last year's Super Bowl win against Atlanta

Pats' Gronkowski expects to play in Super Bowl

because of a back injury.

Blount, who won two Super Bowls with Gronkowski and the Patriots before joining the Eagles, dominated his virtual matchup on Xbox in front of a packed crowd of Patriots fans at a Microsoft store. They left disappointed as Blount led his Eagles to a 33-13 win over Patriots.

Meanwhile, one thing sticks out to Patriots running back Dion Lewis about his time with the Philadelphia Eagles.

"Not playing," Lewis said Tuesday with a smirk.

Lewis is one of three Patriots starters who will be facing their former team in Sunday's Super Bowl, along with receiver Danny Amendola and safety Patrick Chung.

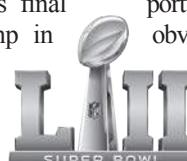
All three players look back on their experiences in Philadelphia differently, but they have played their best football since being rejected by the Eagles early in their careers.

Lewis was drafted by Philadelphia in the fifth round in

2011 and played two seasons for them before he was traded to Cleveland. Amendola was among Philadelphia's final cuts in training camp in 2009. Chung started his career in New England, spent a forgettable year with the Eagles in 2013, then returned to the Patriots in 2014.

Amendola has experienced people doubting his abilities since he entered the league as an undrafted free agent with Dallas in 2008. He signed with Philadelphia in 2009 after being cut by the Cowboys. But after eight months with the Eagles, he was released. He was signed up by the St. Louis Rams and stayed there for four seasons before signing a five-year contract with the Patriots in 2013.

This past Christmas he tweeted a picture of his framed No. 11 Eagles jersey, a gift from a friend. "It's in my pool room—



hanging as daily motivation," Amendola said. "I've come a long way since getting the opportunity to play there. It obviously didn't work out, so I guess I take it as a learning experience and just realize how far I've come."

Chung thought he was heading for a fresh start when he signed a three-year contract with Philadelphia in 2013, but it didn't work out under then first-year coach Chip Kelly. Chung was back in New England the next season. The decision paid off with a Super Bowl ring last season.

As for that 2013 season, Chung was coy about what he remembers about the experience.

"That'll be between me and those people," Chung said.

Lewis said despite his success in New England winning a ring last season and leading the team this season in rushing yards (896) and rushing touchdowns (six), he has learned to

Harden makes historic 60-point triple-double



HOUSTON (AP)—James Harden knew he'd have to do a little more on Tuesday night with the Houston Rockets missing key players.

Even he couldn't have imagined he'd do this much.

Harden became the first player in NBA history to score 60 points as part of a triple-double and the short-handed Rockets beat the Orlando Magic 114-107.

"I just gave it all I had tonight," Harden said. "We all did. We all fought for 48 minutes, we got key stops when we needed to and we made big shots."

Harden scored 18 points in the fourth quarter to eclipse the 57 points Calvin Murphy scored in 1978 to break Houston's single-game scoring record. After Harden broke the

record, cameras in the arena showed a shot of Murphy, who works on the television broadcast team, smiling and clapping for the Beard, who also had 10 rebounds and 11 assists.

The game was tied at 107 after a basket by Marreese Speights with just under four minutes to play. Neither team scored for more than two minutes after that before Harden took over, scoring the next six points to make it 113-107 with 45 seconds left.

He set the scoring mark when he stepped back and made a 3-pointer before crashing to the court after being fouled by Mario Hezonja. He then made the free throw to give him 60 points and bringing the crowd to its feet.

"Amazing (and) topped it off with a four-point play at the end," coach Mike D'Antoni said. "But we had to have ev-



Houston Rockets guard James Harden drives to the basket as Orlando Magic guard Elfrid Payton, left, defends during the first half of an NBA basketball game Tuesday, Jan. 30, 2018, in Houston. AP

Solo sues US Soccer Federation

NEW YORK—Leave it to Hope Solo to get creative on the campaign trail.

Solo filed a formal complaint Tuesday against the United States Soccer Federation, of which she hopes to be elected president on Feb. 10, accusing the governing body of neglecting youth soccer development for the sake of self-serving financial gain.

The former U.S. women's national team goalkeeper, who has focused her energies on managing the sport after her chances of returning to the field dried up, issued the complaint to the U.S. Olympic Committee on the basis of the USSF being "in blatant violation" of the Ted Stevens Olympic and Amateur Sports Act. The act, established in 1978, provides legal protection for U.S. athletes.

Even with the elections just a week-and-a-half away, with Solo going up against seven other candidates, she felt she couldn't let the status quo persist any longer without taking action.

"I joined the USSF Presidential race because I could no longer watch the United States Soccer Federation sidestep its responsibility to the people it was created to serve," Solo said in a statement published to her website. "As a player, I experienced the USSF's 'profit before progress' approach for more than twenty years, and during this campaign, I have spent countless hours talking to people at every level of the sport who all say the same thing: the Federa-

tion has failed them.

"The campaign has also made me acutely aware that the USSF's conflicts of interests and other governance transgressions are so alarming that we can't wait for the results of the Presidential election to take action."

Solo, honored before a U.S. women's friendly against Denmark last week for her 200-plus appearances in goal over a 16-year international career, called out the USSF for failing to advance the women's game, youth programs and global competitiveness for the sake of protecting the money-generating MLS. If she were trying to progress through the system today, Solo contends, she would not have been noticed because her family wouldn't have been able to afford the high costs of playing.

Solo, 36, also threw one of her competitors, Soccer United marketing president Kathy Carter, into the mix, accusing the USSF of trying to pass the torch onto one of its own so the foul play can continue.

"It has also become even more apparent that the Federation has not only been deaf to calls for reform, but is actively working against them," she said. "Why else would the federation's current president and the most powerful member of its board of directors have put their support behind Kathy Carter, who has been employed by MLS or SUM in various capacities since MLS's founding in 1995?"

The USSF did not immediately return a request for comment.

ery minute from him."

Harden, who also had four steals and a block, grabbed his 10th rebound a few seconds later to give him his third triple double this season. He made 17 of 18 free throws and was 19 of 30 from the floor with five 3 pointers.

He said he didn't realize he was the first player with 60 points in a triple-double.

"It's a good feeling, I guess," he said. "Just try to go out there and make an impact every single night on the game, however I can. Whether it's scoring, rebounding, assists, steals, whatever it is. And tonight I guess I was doing everything."

Pistons 125, Cavaliers 114

In Detroit, Andre Drummond had 21 points and 22 rebounds, and the short-handed Detroit Pistons beat Cleveland after the Cavaliers lost Kevin Love to a potentially season-altering hand injury.

Love exited in the first quarter with a broken left hand,

and the Pistons took advantage of his absence, snapping an eight-game losing streak despite a roster that was depleted by their blockbuster trade for Blake Griffin.

Detroit gave up three players to get Griffin, and neither he nor the other two players the Pistons received in return were available against Cleveland.

Wizards 102, Thunder 96

In Washington, beginning what could be a significant stretch without All-Star point guard John Wall, the Washington Wizards got 25 points from Otto Porter Jr., limited Russell Westbrook to 13 and stopped Oklahoma City's eight-game win streak.

Bradley Beal had 21 points and nine assists for Washington, which announced about 7 1/2 hours before tipoff that Wall will have arthroscopic surgery on his left knee Wednesday.

Paul George had 28 points for Oklahoma City, but zero in the fourth quarter. Car-

melo Anthony scored 19, but he missed three shots in the final 30 seconds. Westbrook wound up with 10 assists, six rebounds and seven turnovers and made only 5 of 18 shots.

Jazz 129, Warriors 99

In Salt Lake City, Ricky Rubio scored 23 points and handed out 11 assists as the Jazz stunned the Warriors.

The loss ended a three-game winning streak for the Warriors, who had won seven of eight before facing the Jazz. It was their largest loss of the season.

Warriors coach Steve Kerr seemed to waive the white flag with more than six minutes left in the game, pulling his starters.

Klay Thompson led Golden State with 27 points and six rebounds while Kevin Durant finished with 17.

Knicks 111, Nets 95

In New York, Kristaps Porzingis scored 28 points, Enes Kanter had 20 points, 20 rebounds and five assists, and

the Knicks completed a New York City sweep of the Nets with a victory.

The Knicks returned home from their longest road trip of the season in new uniforms but their same old dominance of the Nets, with their fourth victory in four tries this season. They dominated the interior again and swept the series for the first time since 2010-11—before the rivals shared the same city.

Raptors 109, Timberwolves 104

In Toronto, DeMar DeRozan scored 23 points, Jonas Valanciunas had 18 points and 11 rebounds and the Raptors rallied from a 13-point deficit to beat the Timberwolves.

Kyle Lowry and Serge Ibaka each scored 15 points and Jakob Poeltl had six of his 12 points in the fourth quarter as the Raptors won their 14th straight home meeting with the Timberwolves.

Minnesota has not won in Toronto since Jan. 21, 2004, when current Timberwolves star Andrew Wiggins was eight years old.

Toronto is 19-4 at home this season, the second-best record in the NBA behind San Antonio (21-4).

Kings 114, Pelicans 103

In New Orleans, Zach Randolph scored 26 points and grabbed 12 rebounds, and the Kings beat the Pelicans.

Kosta Koufos had 17 points and 17 rebounds for the Kings, who were able to exploit the absence of Pelicans All-Star and former King DeMarcus Cousins by getting double-doubles from both of their starting big men.

Rookie De'Aaron Fox and reserve guard Garrett Temple, a former LSU player, each scored 15 for the Kings, who've won three of their last four games.

Spurs 106, Nuggets 104

In San Antonio, LaMarcus Aldridge scored 30 points and the Spurs escaped with a victory over the Nuggets.

The Spurs had four players in double figures, including 18 points each from Kyle Anderson and Pau Gasol.

Every Denver starter scored in double figures with Jamal Murray leading the way with 18 points and Gary Harris adding 17.

MLB wants to add runners in pace-of-play idea



NEW YORK

(AP)—A runner would be put on second base at the start of the 11th inning of the All-Star Game and each additional inning, according to the latest pace-of-game proposal by Major League Baseball.

The experiment also would be used in the 10th inning of spring training games, according to the Jan. 9 proposal obtained by The Associated Press. Spring training games would be capped at 10 innings.

Concerned about injuries in games that don't count, the players' association isn't expected to oppose the concept. MLB isn't considering using the rule in any games that count.

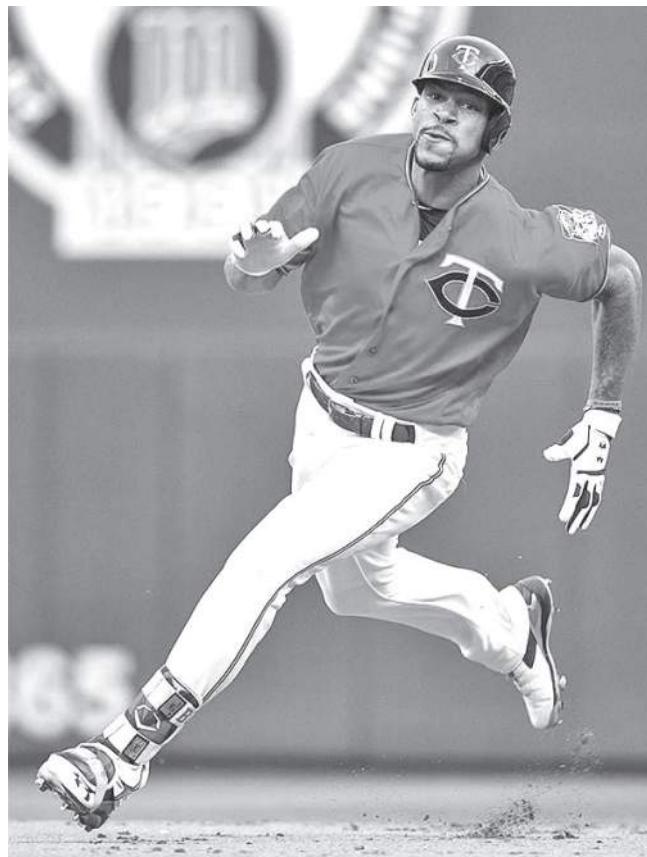
Baseball experimented with the rule last year at the rookie level Gulf Coast and Arizona leagues, putting a runner on second base starting in the 10th. Extra-inning games in those two leagues averaged

27 minutes longer than nine-inning games, down from 43 minutes for all other minor leagues.

Unable thus far to negotiate a deal with players for a pitch clock or limits on mound visits, baseball owners discuss their next step this week during meetings that end Thursday in Beverly Hills, California.

Commissioner Rob Manfred met Jan. 23 with union head Tony Clark. Manfred has long vowed to make changes for this season with or without an agreement but says his preference is for a deal and is willing to negotiate the rules.

MLB has the right to implement the proposal it made last offseason, which includes a 30-second clock between batters and a 20-second clock between pitches that would reset when a pitcher steps off the rubber and when he makes or feints a pickoff throw, according to details obtained by



AP
Minnesota Twins outfielder Byron Buxton sprints to complete an inside-the-park home run against the Arizona Diamondbacks on Aug. 18, 2017, in Arizona.

the AP. There also would be a limit of one mound trip per pitcher each inning, whether by a manager, coach or player, and a second visit would result in a pitching change. Violations would be punished by ball-strike penalties.

Nine-inning games averaged a record 3 hours, 5 minutes during the 2017 regular season and 3:29 during the postseason. Players have resisted a pitch clock while appearing slightly more amenable to limits on mound visits.

Los Angeles Angels owner Arte Moreno is among those who doesn't think radical changes are needed.

"We just watched a World

Series game that lasted over five hours and my wife hung with me the whole night," he said last week at the Hall of Fame news conference. "I would probably say I'm a traditionalist and let them play."

Under the latest MLB proposal, there would be a pitch timer this year only when no runners are on base and it would be set to 18 seconds. A 20-second timer with runners on base would be added for 2019.

The clock would not be used for the pitch following a foul ball or an umpire calling time, and there would be no penalties this year during spring training or April. Starting in May, each player would receive a warning for a violation and penalties would not start until a team's third violation in a game. A player, manager or coach leaving the bench to argue a violation call would be automatically ejected.

KONQER

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Marianas Baptist Academy, Mt. Carmel School, Northern Marianas International School, Saipan International School, Saipan Community School, and Seventh Day Adventist School.

KONQER Sports will be releasing additional details and other information on the new category to be contested along with solo, sprint, completion, and business.

"We're just informing all the private and public schools about this. We'll release details soon," said Endo, adding that they would waive the fees for official school teams.

"If you are an official school team, we will waive your entry fees so that you can compete in the first ever KONQER Battle of the Schools."

Meanwhile, sign up for the 500 free individual entries

ended yesterday with the winners to be announced on Feb. 28. The 500 winners will be randomly picked from a pool of those who registered online at konqersports.com.

Raffle winners will have the chance to choose which leg—Saipan, Guam, and Palau—they want to join. One lucky participant will also earn a free slot to all three stages of the obstacle course race series.

All those who registered for individual entries but did not win in the raffle would get a 50 percent discount from the registration fee of \$100 (adult) and \$40 (student).

After KONQER Saipan, the series' next stop will be the Leo Palace in Guam and the event is set on June 16, while the final leg will be held in Palau on Oct. 5 and 6.

For more information, email Kelli Wedd at kelli.wedd@konqersports.com.

only goal for CNMI United in the second half, helping his squad bounced back from a 3-6 loss to Betde United last Sunday.

Marianas United, on the other hand, fell to a 0-2 mark, as only Jim Maniago scored for the losing team. Marianas United suffered a 1-22 beating against Fake Madrid during the tournament's opening day.

Fake Madrid will play its second game today at 6:30pm against Betde United for the early solo lead in the division. In the co-ed U12 match at 5:30pm, CTSI Petmalu and Tinsel Toes will also collide for the top spot in their age group. Then in the nightcap at 7:30pm, CTSI Petmalu's co-ed U18 squad will challenge ABCD FC.

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER

The Saipan Baseball League has pushed back the opening of its 2018 season to give way to a visiting South Korean baseball team that would like to play against local squads at the Francisco M. Palacios Ballfield.

The SBL has tentatively set Feb. 5 as the opening of its season, but moved the kickoff date to Feb. 12 to allow tune-up matches at the "Tan Ko" baseball field from Feb. 4 to 6 and Feb. 22 to 23.

Yong Chul Jang of M&E Enterprises Inc. Saipan, in cooperation with SBL coordinator Tony Rogolifo, has arranged for the scrimmage between local teams and the visiting South Korean squad. As per the proposed schedule of games, the Korean youth team will play against its CNMI counterpart on Feb. 4 while on Feb. 5, it will be Korea versus Korea. Then on Feb. 6, the match will be between the higher-level units

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than 10 seconds faster than her previous PBT (5:34.29). Jinju also raced in the 100m backstroke and broke the 3-minute barrier after logging 2:59.05, which was faster than her PBT (3:03.58).

Jinju's sister, Jinie, on the other hand, recorded two PBTs—200m individual medley and 200m freestyle. The younger Thompson timed in at 2:50.08 in the 200m freestyle to eclipse her old PBT of 3:01.49, while in the 200m IM, Jinie registered 3:17.62, more than 17 seconds better than her seed time (3:35.67).

SBL pushes back kickoff date



JON PEREZ

Improvement work at the Francisco "Tan Ko" M. Palacios Ballfield has started last week as the facility is getting ready to host visiting South Korean players and games in the Saipan Little League Baseball and Saipan Baseball League this month.

of the CNMI and Korea. Two more games are scheduled on Feb. 22 (CNMI versus Korea junior) and Feb. 23 (CNMI against Korea higher level). All matches will run from 6pm to 9pm.

Jang will be requesting SBL to provide umpires for

the games and officials will be paid for their services. He added that all matches will be recorded and shown in South Korea.

The GSM Masters, GSM Cubs, and the BSI Aces are the teams that could go up against the visiting South Ko-

& Mighty Ocean Swim this Saturday in the waters off Pacific Islands Club.

Registration and check in will begin at 6am, while the race will start at 7am.

Swimmers can enter in the minnow division (200m), meek (one loop race/956m), tweener (two loops/1,900m), and mighty (three loops/2.7 kilometer).

Entry fee is only \$10 and the first 20 swimmers to register will get a free PIC Water Park pass. Fins, snorkel, paddles, and buoys are allowed, but swimmers who will use them are not eligible for awards. Participants have un-

rean squad. The GSM Masters and Cubs are the reigning SBL Masters and Under 25 division champions, while the Aces ruled SBL's last season (open).

In other news, the SBL held a meeting yesterday to discuss the upcoming 2018 season, which will feature nine teams. The league may consider one more team provided that its coaching staff would submit a roster.

Last year's finalists Falcons, 2016 title winners C.K. Bears, D9ers, Blue Jays, GSM, Titanium, Outlaws, and Mariners are the other teams out to foil the Aces' title retention bid.

Despite the change in its opening date, SBL still hopes to end the season early to give the soon-to-be-formed CNMI national baseball team enough time to train for the Micronesian Games that will be held in Yap from July 15 to 28. If the league fails to complete the competition early, it may suspend matches midseason and resume action after the Micro Games.

til 8:45am to complete their respective races.

"SSC would like to invite all swimming enthusiasts, triathletes, open water beginners, and anyone looking to try swimming in our beautiful lagoon to the 12th Meek and Mighty Ocean Swim hosted by PIC. There are four distances for ability levels, from 200 meters to 2.7K. And if you can't complete 200 meters, don't worry we will find something for you," SSC coach Jacoby Winkfield said.

To register or for more information, contact SSC at saipanswimclub@gmail.com.

3rd Aquathlon and 10K Pathway Run

PHOTOS By JON PEREZ



Commonwealth Cancer Association patient navigator Pat Kaipat, left, joins participants and organizers of last Sunday's 3rd Aquathlon and 10K Pathway Run for a group photo at the Kilili Beach Park.



Jinju Thompson, second left, and Rintaro Miyawaki, third left, join TRAC's Ronald Villafria, left, and CCA's Pat Kaipat, right, for a group photo.



Men's Aquathlon champion Christian Villacrujis, center, is joined by runner-up Buboy Aguilar, second left, and third placer Chang Wang Jang, fourth left, at the awards presentation.



Kaithlyn Chavez, fourth left, and Claire Devey, third left, are all smiles after receiving their awards for placing in the Top 2 in the women's aquathlon.



Women's 10K Top 3 Ayano Braxton, from second left, Chiharu Sato, and Marie Sablan gather for a group photo.



Men's 10K run winners Kosuke Sato, from second left, Josh David Joson, and Leon Etienne pose with their medals.



Participants and organizers of the pre-Tagaman race pose for a group photo after the event.



Chiefs agree to trade Smith to Redskins

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Saipan Tribune Sports

Harden makes historic 60-point triple-double

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SAIPAN TRIBUNE

Betde recovers, tops Kanoa Ali'i

'Battle of Schools' in KONQER Saipan

By JON PEREZ
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REPORTER


KONQER Sports will be adding the "Battle of the Schools" in this year's KONQER Saipan to spice things up for the April 28 race.

The "Battle of the Schools" is open to all public and private middle and high schools and each team must be composed of students and faculty members.

"We are encouraging all students in middle and high school, and their faculty to put together a team," said KONQER Sports chief executive officer Kaz Endo.

Chacha Oceanview, Dandan, Francisco M. Sablan, Hopwood, and Tanapag, and Rita H. Inos Junior/Senior High School, Tinian Junior/Senior High School, Kagman High School, Marianas High School, and Saipan Southern High School are the public schools called out to field teams in the first stop of the three-nation series that will also take place in Palau and Guam.

Also invited to join the "Battle of Schools" are Agape Christian School, Eucon International School, Grace Christian Academy, See KONQER on Page 26



A Saipan International School student tries to complete one of the obstacles in last year's KONQER Saipan King of the Hill at the Gov. Eloy S. Inos Peace Park.

ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Betde's Mark Roque faces two Kanoa Ali'i defenders during the second half of their co-ed U12 division game in Saipan Soccer School's 2018 Youth Futsal Tournament last Tuesday night at the TSL Sports Complex.



By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER

Betde regained its bearings quickly after a debut loss, beating Kanoa Ali'i in the lone game in the co-ed U12 division of Saipan Soccer School's 2018 Youth Futsal Tournament last Tuesday night at the TSL Sports Complex.

21 PBTs in 9 events for SSC swimmers

By ROSELYN B. MONROYO
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REPORTER



Saipan Swim Club members combined for 21 personal best times in nine of the 16 events contested during the Tsunami Saipan Mid Season Meet held late last month at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

Siblings Jinju and Jinie Thompson were among the PBT getters for SSC, while Andrei Kaitlynn Chavez also stood out, earning three PBTs.

Jinju's first PBT came in the 100m backstroke event as she clocked in at 1:21.34, surpassing her old mark of 1:25.81. Then in the 400m freestyle, the 14-year-old swimmer submitted 5:23.51—more

See 21 on Page 26



ROSELYN B. MONROYO
Saipan Swim Club's Jinie Thompson does the breaststroke leg of the 200m individual medley event in the Tsunami Saipan Mid Season Meet held last Jan. 20 at the Kan Pacific Swimming Pool.

Betde, which bowed to CTSI Petmalu, 1-3, during the tournament's opening day last weekend, broke into the win column in its second try after dominating Kanoa Ali'i in their 40-minute game.

Mark Roque and Kaithlynn Chavez delivered two goals apiece for Betde, which drew one goal each from Wataru Kadokura, Anthony Austria, and Eros Estolas. Han Tae

Hyun knocked in a pair of goals for Kanoa Ali'i, which got an own goal from Betde's booboo.

Betde was also given an own goal in the first half, while Chavez and Roque hit the board in that period to lift their team to a 3-1 halftime lead. Hyun tallied the lone goal for Kanoa Ali'i in the opening 20 minutes of the match.

In the second half, three more Betde players (Kadokura, Austria, and Estolas) hit their mark, while Chavez recorded her second goal to hand Kanoa Ali'i its second loss in as many matches. Kanoa Ali'i fell to Tinsel Toes, 2-6, during the tournament's kickoff last Sunday.

Meanwhile, two more teams bounced back from their debut losses with CNMI United winning in the co-ed U15 division and La Fabrica prevailing in the lone co-ed U18 age group game last Tuesday.

La Fabrica edged Islanders FC, 3-2, to recover from its 0-9 defeat at the hands of Bruv.

After going scoreless in its first game in the tournament, La Fabrica got its offense going against Islanders FC with Jason Quimzon and Ian Maniago making it to the board. Quimzon drilled two goals, while Maniago added one. Maniago drew first blood for La Fabrica, while Quimzon followed suit for a 2-0 halftime advantage.

Quimzon added one more in the See BETDE on Page 26